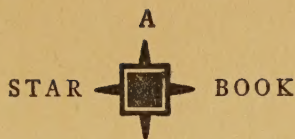








"HOSSES"



“HOSSES”

AN ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
CHARLES WRIGHT GRAY

*“I will drink, by God, both to thee
and to thy horse, and so courage,
frolic, God save the company.”*

RABELAIS

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A DEDICATION: A FOREWORD

Ivon D. Parker, Esq.,
The Breakfast Club,
Beverly Hills,
California.

DEAR IVON:

Here is a book—a volume of stories about horses—that it is my wish to dedicate to you. They are not my stories. I regret that, regret that it was my task to assemble rather than to author the splendid material you will find in these pages—but even in my regret I know that the achievement of a survey so comprehensive as this is possible only by means of the plan we have followed. No one knows better than do you that horses are creatures of great variability, personalities to be considered from many points of view, and that one pen could never do them justice, no matter how hopefully it might work.

Thus it is the effort of a group that we have here, a group which, I am sure, concurs with me in this dedication—for, as I know its individuals, they are gentlemen not unaware of the value of a good tradition.

Los Angeles (indeed, all of California) has changed greatly since those days when horses were common on its main streets, days, as you like to recall, not so long gone but that they embraced the span of

your own youth. Perhaps the change is for the better, and perhaps—as some say—it is a lamentable thing. But small is the use in weighing the goodness or evil of the change. It is an actuality, and the old City of the Angels that basked in Spanish sunlight is no more.

Few, very few, are the reminders that stay with us of those days when there was time to live a little, and to laugh rather a lot. Chief among these is, I do think, the love and respect that true Californians bear for horses. . . . And so, to you, and to the other members of that little band which seeks so valiantly to keep green one of the few of our remaining traditions, this book is dedicated.

Sincerely yours,

C. W. GRAY.

One Park Avenue,
New York City,
New York.
September, 1927.

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THE OUTSIDE OF A HORSE
BY
WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

ALTHOUGH eventful, the years of Will Comfort's literary past have been but steps toward his conclusion that the word Story means a thing of force—magic, no less—rather than of form. Embedded in "The Outside of a Horse" is assurance that he is on the threshold of his achievement.

THE OUTSIDE OF A HORSE ¹

JACKIE BEVIS grew up on Mr. Gould Rosswell's Tennessee estate, Mint Meadows, and with the central idea of riding running horses for a living, which he carried out.

"Any one can see by this time, Jackie, how yo' belong on the outside of a hoss," Mr. Rosswell said, before the boy had his first silk on; and he finished the saying about the outside of a horse being good for the inside of a man.

Jackie pondered long over that. Something wrong about it, he felt; at least, in relation to himself. He didn't clearly know for years what was wrong; certainly it didn't occur to him to dispute the master of Mint Meadows, whose gentle flow of talk was keenly appreciated and smartly obeyed. Jackie had a secret ideal of "gentleman," which Mr. Rosswell personified, and in the small select string of runners bred at Mint Meadows was contained his entire dream of life's fulfillment through early years.

In his first trips out on the Cotton Circuit, he came to know that Mr. Rosswell was almost as highly held among owners remote from Mint Meadows as at home.

"Notoriously a gentleman, Mr. Rosswell is," he heard one Georgian owner say.

This was cause for secret rejoicing, especially since it

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concerned the only parent he had ever known—not counting little Millie, of course, Mr. Rosswell's granddaughter, who always tried to play mother to him. But she was a year younger, couldn't even talk plain and was of quarrelsome disposition.

Jackie was coming fifteen when the first hint reached him that he wouldn't be riding for Mr. Rosswell always. He didn't really grasp until later that the big estate was breaking up, though the mourning of the darkies and the tragedy of empty stables had long been creeping into his blood. It was a fact that he knew what it meant to be lonesome for Mint Meadows before he left for good, but there was another part of him that burned with exultation at the thought of a career on the fast Northern tracks.

His last race for the home stables meant a lot more than a fighting finish of two runners of a field. It was on the old half-mile track at Darbville, Kentucky. He was riding Southern Night, owned and valiantly backed by Mr. Rosswell. Leading in the stretch, his brain became caught in a shiny gloat on what a great thing this winning would mean to himself, just setting out—and right then he felt the hot breath of Swallow-tail, a speedy Lexington mare, on his right knee.

The rest was pure panic, until they told him that Southern Night had been nosed out.

"Anyway, yo' paht was all right, Jackie," the owner said a few hours after the race.

"It wasn't, Mr. Rosswell," Jackie answered.

A warm low moon was in the sky above the stables. The master of Mint Meadows darted a queer glance

down at the boy, caught him by the arm and led him away to a big tarp under which hay bales were piled; then remarked, as if communing with the stars:

"Old Southey has been wahmin' up so good of late, I was inclined to trust him a trifle for straight to-day; but yo' never can tell, which is racin'. Every hoss has off days. Anyway yo' paht was all right."

"It wasn't, Mr. Rosswell."

"Not so loud; I can hear all right. Thinks I, you said something like that, back yondah. What's got into yo', young man?"

"I wanted to win so bad I got the tight collar. Ol' Southey felt it. A horse always knows."

"Nothin' like that showed from the judges' stand. My glasses only picked up you were ridin' easy an' wise."

"I only went through the motions. Wispy Coogan had no right to pass me at the last bend. The second I saw Swallowtail's head at my stirrup I blew up. I can ride in overalls mornin's with the whole track to myself, but when I get silks on and start with a field—"

"What I took to happen was that Wispy's mare had huh speed wohkin' and old Southey didn't," Mr. Rosswell said thoughtfully.

"Southey never was better, only he couldn't get loose of me! My guts crawled up and choked him too."

"But, Jackie, I saw you lay the lash at the right place."

"I got yellow scared on the stretch, Mr. Rosswell, and Southey knew it. Horse always knows—"

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Mr. Roswell pulled out a clover stalk from the nearest bale. He held it up in his hand as if it had been a rose.

“Jackie, don’t you’ evah breathe nothin’ like this out loud again or yo’re done for. Nobody talks thisaway round a race track. I’m goin’ to keep it for yo’ this once.” Mr. Rosswell sniffed the dry clover bloom. “Speakin’ of intestines—it’s well to have ’em, even if they don’t know their place at first. I look to yo’ to be as good a rider as anybody in America in the next five years. Right now yo’ feel a hoss and feel yo’self a little keener than other boys, which will work out all the bettah in the long run. Yo’re just startin’ and I’m climbin’ to the shelf. I’d like to if ol’ Southey’d come over to-day, but I guess when I get shet of the rest of my string, there’ll be enough milk and honey left in Mint Meadows for me and little Millie to keep nourished on for a while. Forget what yo’ told me. Forget it, my boy. I’m payin’ you off to-night just as if you’d won.”

“I won’t take it, Mr. Rosswell! It wasn’t for you I wanted to win—for myself!”

The old man seemed to hear only the first sentence.

“Oh, yes, yo’ will,” he answered quietly. “An’ there’s anothah thing, Jackie. Now that yo’ stahtin’ out in the world, yo’ve got a right to know how yo’ came to live with me. Yo’ weren’t bohn in no manger, Jackie, nor at Mint Meadows, eithah; but yo’ sho’ came young. Nothin’ much to tell—not more’n three particulars. Yo’ fathah was a young friend of mine, always remembah that; an’ not more’n fifteen miles

from my windmill there lived the soul-smitenest young woman as evah looked cute in a bonnet. I saw huh, an' loved 'em both, bein' wintahed with age even then. Only, they went different ways, you repohtin' to me just a short while before Millie comes to stay in the purtiest stretch o' watered grass an' live oak in Tennessee, as yo' know. . . . It's all right this once, Jackie, yo' tellin' me 'bout the tight collah, 'cause I'll keep it safe; but don't yo' nevah spill yo'self like that to no one ailse."

And Jackie didn't. Out among the tracks, in the next three years, he grew up in the midst of influences properly regarded by the most tolerant parent or teacher as ruin for boys—gambling, tobacco, drink. He tried them all, as well as certain peculiarly loathsome medical affairs designed to keep down weight. His reactions were sound, if unusual. In his hard brown head grew and grew a longing for the ordered life in houses, cities, schools, even in churches, such as other boys knew. He wanted Mint Meadows more than any place in the world; but perched on some paddock fence after a day's running, many a dusk of evening, he wistfully watched the crowds leaving the stands and wished he belonged to some handsome man or beautiful woman passing out; that he might be taken somewhere home to stay, where he could have his place in a house, plenty of water and meals.

No one had ever told him to go to bed or to eat regularly or what to eat. Often he was told, however, not to eat at all. Other boys were encouraged to grow, to put on natural bulk and height. The whole

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pressure which Jackie encountered, and which was the first law of his cult, was to stunt himself, to stay a runt. Scales, scales—his fate as a jockey ever in the balance.

He knew what it meant to go hungry, not because he was broke or food was scarce, but to keep off the ever encroaching pounds. He knew a worse thing than hunger—the continual hands off from cup and glass, pump and hose. He didn't want beer or wine; what he dreamed of as fulfillment in this particular was all the water he wanted. Countless times he had led horses to water or carried water to horses, heard them suck in great leisurely draughts, when it was all he could do not to push their heads away and put his own in, his whole body upstanding with revolt. Countless times, too, he had waked up in the middle of the night with thirst, and dropped asleep again to dream of the rain falling on Mint Meadows.

Denial—not a day without it—until he was hard and sullen with it, until it was worked into the unslaked lime of his bones. His hard, narrow jaw told the story.

And that wasn't all. What he knew about horses was all right. He wasn't against horses, but he wanted to know something else. Books, studies—his mind craved them constantly, as his body craved food and water. Why couldn't he know something else? It wouldn't make him know horses any less.

"J. Bevis" on the racing cards—frequently a dozen mounts from Sunday to Sunday these days, his earnings averaging between six and seven hundred dollars the week. There was a certain distinction about him

in relation to money which, of course, he didn't know himself, because it was innate. He wasn't afraid of it—had no particular lust either to spend or save. It was quite as though he came from a family line that had known wealth for generations. Moreover, he was so accustomed to the feel of gambling in the air that life would have been queer without it. Racing dope was second nature; he kept up to the minute without conscious effort, so sure of himself that he rarely talked. Gambling was recreation, not dissipation, to him—a use of knowledge in which there was an occasional worthwhile thrill. He kept a gambling budget which waxed and waned; on the whole, so far, there had always been something to add to his savings from it at the end of each year.

Coming twenty five feet seven inches tall he weighed a hundred and ten pounds, but could make it a hundred and six at a week's notice. Some of the strain had gone out on this point. It was practically established that he could hold himself at a hundred and ten for the present. It meant denial, but he was inured to that. An entirely different struggle was eating at his heart.

An evening in early December, the twenty-seventh day of the Tijuana meeting, which was scheduled to run well into the following spring, he lay on his bunk in the end stall of Broderick's maize-and-blue stable section. Jackie always established himself at the track during a prolonged meeting. His little boarded quarters here were clean as a hospital room. His first move when taking possession of a stall for himself was to

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have fitted a tight screen door; his second to choose a laundry. In the present case, he had a small electric heater installed, because the nights were invariably cool.

There was his chest of sheets and clean blankets, his case of brushes, his tray of silks, boots and breeches that weighed by the ounce. The laws of cleanliness had been grounded in him from his care of the horses. It had occurred to him early in the game that he had a right to keep himself as clean as they kept the Thoroughbreds. Never allowed to drink all the water he wanted, he used it abundantly on the outside. His narrow tanned hand would go into a girl's glove and the nails were groomed like a card sharp's. He might have a room in town, but he lived at the track.

His last talk with Mr. Gould Rosswell was never far from mind. Much as Jackie had revered his guardian before that night in Darbville, he found afterward that he had taken a good deal for granted. The outer world had to show him that men of like stuff didn't tumble in clusters from the tree of life. The ideal of "gentleman" lived enhanced rather than dimmed, and the fairest performance of quality that Jackie ever knew was Mr. Rosswell's not mentioning the fact that he had lost practically his last ten thousand dollars, having backed Southern Night straight to that extent in the afternoon. Such was the "trifle" mentioned.

"I lost it for him, after he had brought me up and set me on my feet. I was riding for myself—not for him. And he let me find it out—not a whimper about that when he led me out to that hay pile." No day

passed without these reflections. It was part of Jackie's own stuff that he couldn't forget; that his griefs were well-nigh immovable. He learned the lesson of silence very well; but mulling over these matters, together with his own particular secret, day in and day out, put him in grave danger of becoming locked in permanent and sickly gloom. Only one thing saved him—his respect and attachment steadily deepened for Mr. Ross-well, somewhat softening the bitterness.

Quiet around the track to-night. Most of the boys had gone off to Old Town. Occasionally he could hear Broderick's mare, Soft Eyes, rustling around in the next stall, browsing for clover tops. She had won for him to-day, yet she was in no hurry to lie down. Particular old dame; probably be midnight before she tramped herself a nest in the straw. Twice besides, he had broken into show money this afternoon. Yesterday he had won and placed out of three mounts. He was riding twice to-morrow and once Sunday, but not in the Whitman Handicap, the big event of that day, designed to bring the full flock of sucker busses down from San Diego and beyond.

Jackie lay on his back, his arms folded, his lips tightly shut. A morning newspaper with yesterday's news had fallen to the floor, but the words of one certain paragraph were still alive in his mind. Even his favorite sporting writer was getting the poison:

"Jackie Bevis rode Pell-Mell to a hot finish yesterday and placed Del Monte against stiff odds. The oc-

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casional wise bird does well to follow the clockers who watch Jackie's sittings closer and closer from day to day. His best choice for this afternoon is Soft Eyes, a mare never to be lost track of in mediocre company. While astonishingly consistent throughout, in the bill-filling affairs and mid-week schedules, there are those who declare Jackie Bevis an unknown quantity in a titled event where the stakes mount high."

"Consistent." . . . "Mediocre." . . . "Midweek performer."

Another newspaper paragraph had burned its way into him and still sparked red from Thanksgiving Day's reports. He had been given a big chance on Turkey Red on the recent holiday:

"Whether it was the sizable purse that got between Bevis and the tape; whether he lost his head, or knew better than any one else what he was doing, will likely never be know. The fact remains that Malkie Harris, on Wild Olive, passed him in the last fifteen yards. Turkey Red, the Bevis mount, showed no flag of distress; the track was to his liking, but his notorious sprint failed to uncork."

Stuff like that "knew better than any one else what he was doing" was slow to die down when it once got started. It was rotting his reputation right now like acid on oiled silk. The first thing a cub reporter learned these days in a sporting office was that J. Bevis was mysteriously unaccountable in a stake race. Jackie wiped the sweat from his forehead and shoved the

little electric lamp back on the table farther from his head. They were getting him. "Consistent midweek performer!" And he hadn't been asked to ride in the Whitman next Sunday. Stuff like this would have reached Mint Meadows long since.

One of his night sweats.

Nothing to say; never had been. The public might as well call him a crook as to know the truth—that he was yellow as a sunfish when the purse bulged and class was keen. His mind moved back to the talk with Mr. Rosswell.

"I guess I came from poor white trash," he muttered. "I guess I'm the original tight-collar kid."

On the last day of the year, Gnat Devlin, chosen to ride General Newgate in the big event of New Year's Day, called the New Leaf Classic, was found out of his head with a fever; pneumonia threatened. Within thirty minutes after the discovery, Jackie Bevis had a caller, young Rorie Mason, of the Cardinal stables of South Carolina, asking him to ride.

"I've got nothing against Gnat—never did," Rorie enthused. "Good boy all right, but I needn't keep it a secret any longer that I told both father and mother to get you for the General in the first place."

Palaver. Fine little fixer, Rorie thought himself.

"Newgate's an old prince," the Cardinal heir went on. "Not a reason in the world—"

"Three reasons that I know of, Mr. Mason."

"What are they?"

"Rockaway, Man Alive, Port Saïd."

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"Good horses, Jackie—good horses! But surely you know the General, old Newgate!"

"Sure, I know him."

"Enough to understand that he doesn't know the use of a whip?"

"Yes, sir. I don't care about hammerin' hide either, but some babies are brought up that way and wouldn't stretch—"

"Listen to me, Jackie. Our entry stands ready to-day to kill himself any running. Besides, he's mother's special pet. She's here—way from South Carolina for this race, and she'd just as soon see me whipped—"

Gnat Devlin wasn't the only jockey sick in quarters that morning at the Tijuana track.

"Lucky they're not slipping a thermometer under my tongue," Jackie muttered, after Rorie had left. "They'd quarantine the track for yellow fever."

Out through the screen door a little later he noticed for a second time the face of a stranger. The Cardinal people probably feared a frame—his every move to be watched until they poked him up in the saddle to-morrow afternoon. His hand gripped the iron piping at the head of his bed. It didn't show a tremble, but there was a flutter at the core of his wrist, a flutter in his chest. He had been riding every day in a cool blue light—that steely light of his own on ordinary days. Gone now—vanished the moment Rorie Mason entered his quarters, asking him to ride in the stake race.

He went out into the still sunlight; not yet mid-forenoon. Everything was changed. The Mexican

hills had a greasy look, and over the sea was a faint fume, as from a fry pan. He made his way to the Cardinal stables and stood at the half door of the General's stall. The grand old chestnut stood back in the shadows. His bandaged front legs showed clear, all the rest vague.

"Doesn't take to me. No wonder. Horse always knows."

For several minutes he stood there; not a sign of awareness from the Thoroughbred, hanging back at the far end of his stall. Jackie walked away, the hurt deepening as his mind conned the reputation of the Cardinal aristocrat—one of those eager gallant runners, regarded as a member of a high-toned family at home, the pet of a whole Southern community.

"That's the life," he reflected. "It used to be that way with old Southey at Mint Meadows."

Eleven entries for the classic, but Jackie could only see Man Alive, Port Saïd, Rockaway and the General. He had ridden the gray Rockaway a year ago at Belmont, an unweathered three-year-old then. Port Saïd had won twice in fair company at the present meeting. Man Alive was just in from Juarez—eleven races in the past seven months for him, and only out of the money twice. The General had won or placed in his last six races even in faster fields. It might look different in the paddock to-morrow, where he always saw things in close-up; but right now it was Man Alive, with Morsie Egan up—Morsie, twenty-five years old, who could do a hundred flat. Runt-o'-Brass an English sporting writer had nicknamed him. Brains enough to play

chess, but not to keep his temper—that was Morsie Egan.

Seven other entries; but Newgate, Man Alive, Port Said and Rockaway raced all night in Jackie's brain, wearing him out in that deadly physical inaction always connected with his fierce bunk concentrations of the night before. The next noon, he saw the figures posted, with Man Alive favorite, Port Said and Rockaway balanced for second pick, and Newgate third in the betting. The change in jockeys had cast a spell of doubt over the famous Cardinal entry. With Gnat up, the General would have jostled Man Alive for first choice. No secret about this. The bystanders who didn't know who listened, freely commented. Jackie took his shame to his quarters and there ate it, standing up.

In the paddock five minutes before the bugle, he stood rigidly at the General's head, enduring the old din and clash of a divided self—passion to win, fear of defeat. It was in this inclosure from day to day that his real talent began to operate.

"I'll know what I've got to do in the paddock!" An old saying of his when thinking about a race ahead of time. A hundred times he might have whispered a tip to a stable hand and had a winning bet placed before the tape was sprung, but that was against his code.

The clear steely blue of ordinary afternoon wasn't working to-day. He was uncentered by the feverish desire to change the racing public's idea—for the word of his clean bill of health to go to Mint Meadows above all. It was this very force of his desire that aroused

the crippling fear that he couldn't make good. Besides, not for a second could he forget that the big chestnut wasn't taking to him.

The gray gelding, Rockaway, had just flicked past under his crimson-and-black blanket, head high and eager, little Freddie Blunt standing ready with the look of one waiting to be hanged; and right now the whole complexion of the race changed abruptly for Jackie's eyes. The favorite, Man Alive, was trembling in the next stall—shoulders quivering, eyes filmy, withers wet—too much work, overstrained, possibly—stale and unnerved to-day.

A whispered oath from Morsie Egan—the last word or two suppressed, because at this moment Mother Mason was entering the paddock from the scale room. It would have curdled her blood, but she wasn't quite close enough to hear. Man Alive's chance fell still lower—from that curse. The red mare, Port Saïd, had looked fit. She gayly whacked the boards with a lighting hind hoof as her ribbons were tightened. They liked her here at Tijuana, but she hadn't the reserve for this company, carrying a hundred and twenty-four pounds—not to Jackie's paddock view, at least. Mrs. Mason had taken her place at the General's head on the far side. No panic in the runner's eyes, but still that aloof look—closed up. The silky muzzle drew away from Mother Mason's clinging hands.

"Doesn't love me—forgotten his missus?" she whispered.

The old South flung itself back to Jackie from the tone and words. And then under the General's throat

—as if he had never looked at a woman before—he met her eyes, imploring, searching, a touch of suspicion, something he had never met in the eyes of a man. The words trailed on—“Doesn’t love his ol’ missus?”

And Jackie knew an amazing temptation to speak out to her, to make a clean breast of it—that he wasn’t right, that the General couldn’t be right, with his jockey in a funk.

He was up. They were moving out. The trumpet was answered from the stands. Out in the sunlight, Jerry Conley leading forth the field on his paint pony. One mile and seventy yards. They were back at the tape—a tangle—eleven horses fighting the line. Jackie was still seeing Mrs. Mason’s face. One of the track hands, supposed to be helping to get the horses’ heads over the tape, stood braced with a whip—a picture of fear, with a whip in his hand.

“What d’you think you’re drivin’—bulls?” Jackie called coldly, for the whip hand was unsettling the General. “Ease back, mister; I can get him up better without you. Ease back, I say, or I’ll jump you.” Pent hate surged out of his chest in the strain. At the same instant he remembered Morsie Egan’s break of temper and how it had lowered his idea of Man Alive’s chance. Whang! went the barrier, click of camera and the whistle of a lash from behind. The General plunged, instead of springing into stride. Jackie knew as well as if he had turned to look that the whip had got in its work as his horse passed.

No time for rage—an insurmountable task! Eight horses were in front of him at the first turn, Port Saïd

leading, Man Alive and Rockaway at the red mare's heels. Rotten start, the General fouled by outrage, but now gamely trying to get down to work.

"He—is—an—old—prince, but we're not together. He's carrying me—I'm not riding him!"

Three more outclassed horses were passed at the half, the General running sixth, with Port Saïd four lengths ahead and still hurrying, Man Alive next and Rockaway three. Jackie's brain raced too. "He is an old prince, but he's fighting uphill. . . . She saw clear through me. She knew what's the matter!"

At the three-quarter turn, he heard the stands like a coming typhoon. Three ahead were running abreast, the General stretching into the storm, two lengths behind. Then silence. Jackie was struck with it; the clear blue light again. All he knew was that a sudden fiery ardor was pouring from him to the General, and this gust of warmth had magically dispelled all fogs and fears. No longer on the outside. He was one with a great running machine.

Port Saïd wavering. Now the General went by the red mare as if she were running in sand. Just ahead, Morsie Egan was plying the leather to Man Alive, but the place was still open between him and Rockaway, which Port Saïd had held so long. Jackie's hand made one of its great moves, guiding the General in to the left of Man Alive. That drowning look on Morsie's face—Jackie knew how it felt to look like that—and a withering curse from the man who hadn't filled in the gap, as Man Alive lost his stride and was passed.

The last sixteenth—in clear steely blue—inch by inch.

“One more! Go get him—go get him, old champion! . . . Can’t be done—”

Rockaway was too good that *matinée*. Freddie Blunt had copped.

He saw Mrs. Mason crying over a welt on the General’s flank. He moved nearer.

“Go away! Oh, go away!”

For once in his life, Jackie defended himself out loud:

“You don’t think I did that, ma’am?”

He saw her shoulders from behind, one arm raised. No one spoke to him after that.

He awoke next morning feeling very old and tired, as he reached for the morning papers, picking out this account first:

“Never did a horse run a braver race after the first quarter than the Cardinal entry, and never was there a more superb stroke of horsemanship than when Bevis chose to dart in past the favorite instead of going around. Man Alive was outgamed then and there, but Rockaway was not to be headed. The young gray of the crimson-and-black stables had just enough to close with, beating a better horse, to the idea of this observer. It hasn’t come out if Jackie Bevis has a middle initial, but if he has, it must be the letter ‘U.’ There’s no law to restrain any man from reserving an

opinion, but Unlucky is the kindest thing that can be said."

In practically all the other sheets, the unlucky start was reported, with less delicate intimations of a weasel's job underground.

There was a photograph of the start used in one of the papers the second day after the classic—probably crowded out of the first day's reports. The whip hand at the tape showed clear. Jackie had a struggle with himself not to take it to Mrs. Mason, but she had said "Go away!" He stayed tired through the days that followed. He rode day after day, but his bounce didn't come back. Hope no longer tortured him; apathy instead. For the first time in his life, he thought of leaving the game entirely. He had other thoughts of changing his name, of going to England or France, even Africa—of starting all over in a foreign stable. He wanted to change his face too.

One night in his quarters he turned on his electric heater and heard a faint pop. The radiating wires didn't glow red as usual. He found the electrician, who screwed in a new fuse; but again the pop, the heater staying cold.

"I see," remarked the mechanic a moment later in absorbed tone, and pointed out where two wires had worked together at a socket connection. "A short circuit."

Jackie had been queerly attentive, and understood.

The next day, though golf was foreign matter to his

eyes, he was attracted to the following newspaper paragraph.

"Blake Moffatt lost the finals of the Lincolnshire golf tournament yesterday to Scotty Edwards by a single ill-judged stroke, but the sequel will be remembered by the present writer long after the day's win and loss. With the fine trophy yanked from his hand at the last moment, Blake Moffatt didn't remark about his own ill-luck or say that he had an off day, but took it out in praising Scotty Edwards' performance—one man clean of that narrow, ingrown self-worship which has carried many a player into a vicious circle . . . many a man these days is so deeply rutted in his own idea of winning, that his nerve goes—that freedom and daring so essential to a gamester, but worst of all, his good sporting grain. The whole realm of sport is richer for a player of Blake Moffat's quality."

Jackie found himself sitting up. The little heater was glowing red. He held out his hand to its silent radiation. The moment of a lifetime.

"Short-circuited," he muttered aloud. "That's what has been the matter with me."

In a rush, the New Leaf ran again through his mind—to the last quarter, when the old General's courage had pulled him out—out of the short circuit.

"This reporter's got something and he's told it to me," he added, moments afterward; and still the kernel of truth sank deeper in.

Daily races through January, and the supreme event of the Tijuana meeting began to be talked about—the Sisson Handicap of mid-March, for all ages; ten-thousand-dollar stake, with at least sixty thousand added. Already it was reported that Malkie Harris was to ride Man Alive. Rockaway, the Classic winner, was still at the Mexican track and Freddie Blunt would try to take him over again. Morsie Egan was said to have closed for Shavetail, the Maryland entry. Daily something new. General Newgate had been taken North, but might be brought back. That would let Gnat Devlin in. . . . “Go away!”

Early February days passed, each bringing a gash to his pride, but Jackie kept up the fight of his life never to fall again into the short circuit. He didn't keep his screen door locked; but so far as he was concerned in relation to the Sisson, he might have been running a fruit stand at the track, until the crowning event was two days less than a month distant, and a telegram arrived that made him look upon all former struggles as boyish and trifling to bear:

“Hold clear for the Sisson Handicap. I'm coming with Millie and Black Ball, son of old Southey.”

Two days later he saw the entry posted, “Four-year-old black stallion, out of Still Waters, by Southern Night, Mint Meadows, Tennessee,” but a horse absolutely naked of mentionable performance in any official record. A second telegram to meet a certain limited in San Diego, and Jackie was there when the

old gray head showed above the little knot of people stepping down, a young woman with him.

"Just get us to our hotel as soon as yo' can convenient," Mr. Rosswell said breathlessly. "How long was it we were in the dessut, Millie?"

"All yesterday afternoon and night."

"More dessut than I took this native land of oun to hold and contain."

A kind of fulfillment, the words and tones; but this young woman at his side, dignified, sparing with her words. Such words as she did use were quite plainly uttered. Millie having presumptuously changed herself around in four years—simpler if she hadn't come.

The door of the hotel room was locked, ice water served. Mr. Rosswell took a little brass key from his vest, inserted it in one of his limp fat bags and straightened up with a paper package in his hands. Memories sprang to life in the room.

"From Mint Meadows, an' considerin' the dessut, mighty fresh leaves. Just hold the paper in yo' two hands, my friend."

Mr. Rosswell burrowed further, drawing forth a small lilac-colored jug, mortar and pestle, an extra paper bag.

"Laid by when yo' were no bigger than a bullfrog, Jackie. No burnt sugar in this pohtion—just sho-enough dew that gathers on young corn."

The third in the room disdained all interest whatsoever, until leaves were crushed and ice cracked the second time.

"But you said just one."

"There were two dessuts, Millie. I remember two dessuts distinctly. Moreover, my deah, Mr. Bevis and me is preparin' for wohds. . . . Speakin' of the colt, Jackie, though they wouldn't take him on the Limited, I was assuhed, suh, his arrival would occur within two days of ours. Two good black boys with him."

"I've never heard of Black Ball."

"Sho yo' have. Fuzz-tail little yearlin' runnin' with his mammy when you left. Millie wouldn't hear of lettin' him go, 'cause he was so full o' fun."

"I remember the brood mare."

"Still Waters? Sho yo' remember huh. As to yo' question regardin' what the colt's done, I ask you, do I look incapacitated to you, broke down or se-nile inexcusable?"

"You look just the same to me, Mr. Rosswell."

"The answer then is, young Marse Black Ball has brought us here for the Sisson."

Jackie considered the large expense of transportation, the big entry fee, express train for the young stallion and all the rest. Was Mr. Rosswell like other old owners—unable to stay out of the game until flat broke? The easy-flowing talk gained headway in the room, but Jackie hadn't really begun to listen, his mind harrowed, his body sick with the situation. He never had cared for long shots. The romance of the dark horse in general didn't appeal to him. He had ridden too many to defeat, passed too many others on better mounts.

"Yes, suh, grew up till last spring with no more serious responsibility than to keep the crickets and

meadow larks boiling up from the grass, and to see to it that the burrs didn't die out of his tail. Just fillin' himself with clean water and green truck, all his trainin' self-conducted, before last spring, till we finally had to take notice he had an antelope an' a greyhound rolled up in him, not to mention a cannon ball. 'Member that ol' lane that crosses the brook, where it used to get so muddy in winter? Well, he made that ol' lane into a track for himself, holdin' his career in mind serious. Sun or rain, runnin' himself into a stake hoss—didn't make no difference about the mud. I've seen him come up to the fence where I stood and look at me out of a plastah cast of Tennessee subsoil as if inquiren' how I liked his last quarter. Never had a leather on him till last spring—an' here we are."

"All he knows about running in company, you say, is a few state fairs last summer?"

"Even then, held in mighty careful, I assuh you, so's not to get into the papers."

"But he'll be up against a field of veterans. The horse that wins the Sisson, Mr. Rosswell, will be on his legs from the tape."

"That's where yo' come in, Jackie. Of co'se, I'm figurin' he's goin' to be mighty well ridden, an' that him an' yo'll get mighty close together durin' the next three weeks. . . . Jackie, it's a mature man-hoss comin' this way through the dessut—a hoss never stretched as a baby or molested in his growin' up—the runnin'est imp—"

The room seemed full of crushing responsibility that settled upon Jackie's shoulders. The latest news

of the Sisson ran through his mind: The unbeaten White Man on his way from Louisville; Newgate on shipboard coming down the coast. Rockaway, Man Alive, Shavetail, Japonica, Newgate, White Man—better horses than Southern Night had ever been. No sentiment in his head could go against that. He turned to the window, now darkened with early evening. Millie was standing there and met his eyes. Mr. Ross-well left the room to send a telegram which he said would catch his express car at Albuquerque about this time.

“How do you stand on all this?” Jackie said, moving toward her.

“What do you mean?”

“Do you know what you’re doing—an untried colt against the fanciest horses in America?”

She was like somebody else, talking so plain.

“I haven’t reached the time yet when I don’t believe in my grandfather.”

“Why, I believe in Mr. Rosswell, Millie, more than any man I ever knew; but this is a running match—cold, hard as coin. I’d give—I’d give all I’ve got to win for him, but I haven’t—I haven’t the stuff.”

“I don’t understand you.”

“I can’t see this colt’s chance. I’ve been riding too much; I’ve seen too much, maybe. I’m not lucky.”

The strength of old days at Mint Meadows was upon him—the deadly wear of all his silences and failures since. The room was almost dark, his face haggard. Words began to creep out of him—all the things he had wanted to tell Mother Mason.

"It's been cold hard ridin' since I left home, nothin' else. I haven't forgotten I lost for him the last day at Darbville. I can't lose for him again. I think—I think I'd go under, to lose the last of Mint Meadows for him."

She was nearer.

"I knew when I first saw you you were terribly strained, Jackie. Can't you forget everything until the colt comes—until you see what he can do? And, Jackie, no matter what they said in the papers, we knew all the time—"

His tone was dry and close to cracking.

"What did you know?"

"That you've been straight."

"Straight? I've never sold a race, but I haven't got over the tight collar."

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Jackie Bevis?"

"I sure am, Millie. He told me at Darbville never to speak of it, and I haven't—till now. But I belong to the cheap ones."

"Don't! Oh, please, don't! I think—I think that's what we've come here for."

"What?"

"Oh, don't you know yet? It's because—because there's something in you—finer—"

Apparently it wasn't in the design for him to understand now what she was trying to say. Standing before her, he only knew for the moment the agony to go on. It was as if she were the door to Mint Meadows and he never could enter until his slate was clean. He had been dying of homesickness all the time—that was

clear now. Thirst for water, but a hint of deeper thirsts—haunting rain falling in Mint Meadows! He could hear it falling now, with her near, sometimes the long-ago child returning to her eyes, sometimes a familiarity more ancient still.

“It’s in every newspaper office. All they can think of when my name comes up is—”

Her head was shaking for him not to say it, her hand lifted before him.

“—crooked!”

The slow step sounded in the hall. He drew back. The door opened. They were at opposite sides of the room when Mr. Rosswell entered.

Three days later Black Ball was brought down from San Diego in a van. In one corner Jackie sat on a stool, studying the young stallion. “Out of Still Waters, by Southern Night,” he mused. “Not much like the names called to the cashiers in the betting booths these days—Skinflint, French Fry, Alley Hen, Chopping Block, Shavetail. . . . Last corner of Mint Meadows mortgaged, hanging on the whim of this flighty kid.”

Black Ball was safely stalled at the track.

“He’s sure full of fun,” Jackie remarked, and not another word, though Mr. Rosswell hovered for more.

In the days that followed, Jackie’s cot stayed sharply folded and unmussed. The young man found himself hating the place, as one shudders at a room in which he has passed through a tormenting illness.

No more bunk concentrations—steady warfare against the short circuit.

Jackie didn't stroll over to the Cardinal stables to see Rorie or his father. Mother Mason had returned to South Carolina, but there was a call to make on General Newgate, now back in his old stall. A hush fell upon the stable boys as he approached; to avoid suspicion, he had to come when others watched. He didn't lift his hands above the lower half of the door. The big chestnut stood back in the shadows as before.

"Hello, mister," said the low voice.

The head slowly lifted, and presently the General idled forward at a swinging walk. He paused and slowly reached his muzzle to the face in the doorway. Hardly a touch. Jackie didn't linger. His throat had filled tight and he didn't trust a word, but he had gotten what he came for.

"We came together to stay—that last quarter!"

He brought Black Ball in from a morning gallop. Mr. Rosswell was hovering again.

"Ain't much like his father, is he?"

Jackie shook his head.

"Nor like his mother either."

"Nope."

"Just himself, ain't he?"

"Sure full of fun, Mr. Rosswell."

"Now as to that, I've been waitin' fo' you to express yo'self."

It was hard, but Jackie absolutely refused any encouragement designed to make his friend plunge. Careful business also, to keep away from the clockers.

Black Ball somehow had touched the whims of the sporting writers—considerable banter, although the big purse almost visibly for all experts above the heads of the magic money-makers—White Man, Shavetail, Rockaway, Newgate and Man Alive.

"We'll be running alone," Jackie whispered in Black Ball's stall.

He saw clearly ahead that his mount wouldn't be picked out by the stands as the field passed in the show-off; no lift for him from the cheering thousands—a force to run against rather. A single stiff straw protruded from the black one's rubbery muzzle. Jackie pulled it out.

"Not polite to wear a toothpick, mister."

One forenoon on the far side of the track, as they let out a little, he became aware that a watch had been sprung on him for a quarter or so.

"But anything they find out will only puzzle 'em deeper. I haven't pressed him yet," he told Mr. Rosswell. "He's sure—"

"Yess, sho comical, I heard yo' say."

"—sure willing to stretch."

It was the first word that might be construed into a hope, and the ardent old horseman pounced upon the morsel.

"'Co'se he is. Any one can see yo' haven't knelt on his withahs yet; but when yo' do, that mile an' sixteenth of the Sisson will be just like a mornin' meal to Marse Black Ball. He'll want to keep right on goin' on' eat up anothah—"

Mr. Rosswell's head was raised, eyes shining, mind

straining for further figures of speech. That moment, Jackie foresaw a possible moment ten days from now, stands roaring over the achievement of a favorite, alien numbers posted, the name of Gould Rosswell torn like a loser's betting card from all connection with Mint Meadows.

"The horse that wins will only have to do it once. A mile and sixteenth—that's the Sisson, Mr. Rosswell," he said coldly, but his heart softened as the old man turned his back. An old pleasantry of the tracks came to his lips. "But he's sure a good kid, Mr. Rosswell. For sale this mornin'?"

"Not this mornin'."

Jackie spent a forenoon alone with Millie in San Diego; not an outing exactly; business with an attorney, banks and telegrams, and a trying talk before that began.

"I can't do this without you, Miss Mildred, but it's got to be done to-day."

"I haven't the right—you haven't!"

"But he's like a father to me—don't forget that. And we've got a great young horse. No telling what I could do with him after a year's ageing—six or eight starts in flying company. As it stands, we lose him and Mint Meadows if we fail to cop this time, which isn't fair—not when I've got the money lying idle."

"But, Jackie, you know his pride!"

"I ought to know. I lived in his house fifteen years—only house in the world to me. I don't want to

lose it. . . . You see, it isn't the kid's speed I'm afraid of. It's his lack of experience."

"Oh, I can't tell you, Jackie, I really can't!"

"I'll have to get you another boy to ride—unless you do!"

A strange Southern sentence came to her lips:

"It would bow his head low, Jackie, to be helped this way. Being a sportsman is dearer to him than what's left of Mint Meadows."

"You keep counting me out, Millie. It won't break his heart to have a partner—to take me back. I haven't picked up any other guardian; I haven't settled down in any other home. Why, don't you see, it's all for me?"

Her eyes met his, challenging and defiant as long ago.

"Jackie!"

"Yep."

"Is it true you won't ride if I refuse to tell you?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll have to, even if you are mean and stubborn."

She gave him the names of recent Tennesseans who held Mr. Rosswell's notes, which Jackie arranged to be taken up, feeling somewhat better at once.

The day before the Sisson, was gray and cold. From the hills back of the stables, Jackie saw that the sea was shot with mile-long lines of white. He was riding once that afternoon, and the chill went through his silks like sleet. After the race, he saw

the stable boys running to meet the horses with blankets, even before they passed the judges' stand coming back.

"Not even a gunny sack for a man," he muttered whimsically.

A wild one in the Old Town—that night before the Sisson. For a long time he stood in the dark of the stall with Black Ball. His hand slid under the blanket. The big fellow was cozy in his own cool way—"cool as the cheek of health."

"Never been stretched. And to-morrow those pirates—and your mouth's just a baby's mouth yet."

Black Ball was watching the lights—a steady chain of lights across the long bridge from the Mexican custom house to Old Town; busses and motor cars by the hundreds already pouring in from the north. Jackie pulled the high-held muzzle down to his own cheek. They breathed together.

"Just a baby, and all I've got from years of stretchin' has to go into you to-morrow all at once. Can you stand it, kid, when I close the forceps on you? Can you stand up and run with it?"

He swept out his quarters late that night, straightened trunks and boxes, as if it were his last on earth. He had dreaded the idea of turning in, but fell asleep at once. It wasn't a dream or churning of old torments that wakened him after midnight, but rain; no passing shower, either, but an easy trailing start, gradually gaining force. The big February downpours had been delayed; at daylight it looked as if they'd all arrived at once—every outlook changed. Mr.

Rosswell came down early, a deep gleam in his quiet eye.

"Specified and delivahed for Mint Meadows, Jackie! Young Marse Black Ball will think he's back in the old lane—his natural element, suh. Mile and sixteenth? Why, I can just see him swimmin' home to-day!"

"It'll be a matter of plowin' in," Jackie said idly.

"That's where youth will be served—heart sound as a wintah apple. As I've always said, our entry ain't nevah been hurt."

"Never been trained either."

Mr. Rosswell moved to the screen and looked out.

"It may look different to me in the paddock," Jackie resumed as he pulled on his overalls. "Maybe the dirt's to our advantage. Maybe not. White Man's a contender, wet or dry. I've heard he's a tractor for heavy going. It might look different to me in the paddock, but I wouldn't back Black Ball right now for any better than place or show, if I was you, Mr. Rosswell."

"When you get to the paddock, Jackie, you're there to prepah to mount, not to talk."

The other's voice could hardly be heard above the rain.

"I didn't mean that I might pass you a tip from the paddock. My talk's about done for the day right now—until the race is over anyway. But I'm askin' you a last time not to back our colt straight, as you did Southern Night the last time I rode for you."

"Pshaw, Jackie, don't be downhearted at the very

last! I know you don't expect an ownah to see what's goin' on. Notoriously biased, yo' boys always think an ownah is; but yesterday when you brought our boy in from his gallop he looked better to me than evah before—and it hadn't rained then!" Jackie lowered his head. The suspicion came that his friend's bets were already laid.

"And that's not all, suh."

"What more, Mr. Rosswell?"

"I saw as never before how you belong on the outside of a hoss."

"Ridin' on the outside of a horse will never bring me in first or even second to-day, Mr. Rosswell. I've got to ride from the inside." Which, for the first time, answered that long-outstanding question.

"To which I concurs without reservation. An' may I ask what yo' about to do right now?"

"I'm takin' the kid out to let him feel and smell the rain."

The clouds bent lower and shattered themselves. By noon five of the twelve entries were scratched, the track a solid gray gleam like a river. Black Ball was the single long shot. The shortened list of entries brought his figures down to eighteen to one in early afternoon, instead of twenty-four to one, where he had stuck in preliminary posting. At the other end of the scale was White Man, the favorite, at three to five. Man Alive was scratched at 1:30 in the afternoon. Jackie expected Rockaway to pass out, too, as the mud deepened; but the gray winner of the New

Leaf was one of the six to enter the paddock, Freddie Blunt still hanging back in the scale room, looking about ninety years old, in spite of the adolescent down that stood out from the goose flesh of his face. Never wise to underrate the Blunt boy, in spite of his looks, but Jackie couldn't see the gray gelding for to-day.

White Man, Morgan up; Shavetail, with Morsie Egan; Japonica, Ed. Wood; General Newgate, Gnat Devlin—and it wasn't only the horses that Jackie studied with deep intensity in the gloom. Mr. Gould Rosswell, a host wherever he moved among men, easy-talking, easy-smiling—not a sign of strain. That was the nerve that had spirited one J. Bevis from the beginning.

“Only the old South grows that kind, and only once in a long while.”

Millie hadn't actually come into the paddock. Her chin just reached to the top of the fence that kept out the spectators, the hood of her raincoat round her hair, face still and white as a flower in a vase, her eyes not meeting his.

White Man went dragging by, reedy as a pike, a folded blanket across his kidneys—gray roan showing purple now in the shadows, like a wine stain on a tablecloth; winner of the recent Embassy, Morgan up, the same riding him to-day. And Shavetail, the sorrel gelding, a sullen affair, with square-cut corners, like a polo poster—looked to have a temper to go with Morsie Egan's. The fluffy Japonica, only mare in the race, a Los Gatos offering that Jackie had never seen before. Round and round the paddock—White Man, Shave-

tail, Rockaway, Japonica, Newgate. And from one of the moving chins at the rail, Jackie heard: "That's Black Ball—the long shot." A snicker. "Not a chance. More money than brains—the man who owns that one; but the other five—worth half a million!"

They had saddled and were passing out. Jackie looked back as the bugle sounded. Millie still stood at the paddock rail. He wasn't sure if she waved, through the gray blur. The horses plunged, tails tightening like scared puppies, under the first cold pelting of the storm—slanting spears of dull glass, steadily pouring. The nearer Mexican hills wore a condemned look. The great board walk in front of the grand stand was a heaving tumult of umbrellas, and up in the stands not a chair was used; the thousands on their feet, but huddled back from the lower tiers of seats, where the rain reached. The mile-and-sixteenth post was almost directly in front of the lane from the paddock to the track; but before the start, the six entries had to parade at a walk before the judges and stands, Jerry Conley leading on his dripping pinto.

The torrent had softened the track to its 'dobe bed. Jackie felt the slow slide of the clay under Black Ball's hoofs, an ugly sense of noncontrol. He was riding third in the preliminary show-off, White Man leading, the blocky quarters of the pale Shavetail just in front. Morsie Egan's face jerked around to his, eyes hard as the purse he was out after. Jackie knew a queer empty coldness after that, loneliness, but that wasn't all; something about it all that left him out.

"But the other five—worth half a million!"

Shavetail squatted in sudden flare of rage. Jackie's eye caught him settling and jerked his mount to the left as the pale one let fly.

"He'd have split the kid's knee with that one."

This wasn't competition; it was war. All the boys were muttering, their drenched silks binding like court-plaster—no distinct words. A ghastly smile formed on Jackie's lips.

"We're out to kill, horses and men!"

He had never been like this. The deadly hate he felt at the core of to-day's game was like an actual pressure around his shoulders and chest—hard as tightening hemp. It was as if the yelling of the spectators tightened the crush of the strands. Jerry Conley turned them back toward the post.

Gradually he began to know he was different, in the interminable seconds of the parade. Something had died out of him since the New Leaf. Helpless now, his mind reverting foolishly to Mint Meadow days. The head of Black Ball looked pitifully coltish, soft-mouthed baby in a barnyard; and these were aged monsters—the roan darkened in the deluge, Shavetail even paler.

White ineffectual smile still on his lips. What prevailed so steadily and hard upon him was that he hadn't the stuff to work with now. The old hells of the short circuit were burned out, but no new power had come to take its place. War—horses and men.

They were back at the post, the tape was cocked in front—Black Ball not taking at all to modern methods

of alignment. No whipper to-day. Jackie kept an eye on the starter's hand. This was the moment he had feared from the day of the telegram, but fears were curiously worn out now. Back again and again, he cajoled the young stallion, watching the starter's hand out of the corner of his eye. They wouldn't wait for him much longer. Just as he got Black Ball nosed in, the perverse Shavetail backed out. They wouldn't wait—

And they didn't. The instant Shavetail worked back into place the tape was sprung—with Black Ball off his front feet and facing the paddock. Jackie wheeled him, and in the same instant lashed back with his whip. Just once, but that single cut shocked the stallion loose from every petty distraction, leaving at work the one ruling purpose of his breed.

Newgate was away clean and out in front, with Japonica's head sprawled sidewise at his girth. She was struggling to get her stride in the clay—White Man and Shavetail half a length back. Rockaway had slipped at the first jump and hadn't recovered himself. Black Ball passed him in front of the stands, with the full mile to go. No low hound-running, but a high plunging gallop—tremendous hurl of force required for each jump; no running match this, but a struggle through a bog. Sheets of dirt-water shot up from the heels of Shavetail and the roan. Jackie lowered his face into Black Ball's mane, his eyes just slits, mud in his nostrils.

Japonica wavered at the first turn. She seemed to need the whole track to retire in. Jackie suddenly became aware from her movements that her rider, Ed

Wood, was blinded with mud. He gave the faltering mare wide berth and glanced back under the loop of his left arm—Rockaway still sinking back under a ton of money of those who had watched him win the New Leaf. Nothing to fear from behind.

Newgate held his own at the half, running high like a fire horse with tonnage in tow. Shavetail and White Man measured each other at his heels, letting the General plow through. Behind this pair was an open length which Jackie watched, in a strange vast roominess of time, all the time in the world—the illusion of the intolerably slow-going.

“A mile and sixteenth—it’s four miles! Can you do it, kid—can you keep it up?”

Through sheets of mud, he had only to see the great driving strokes of Shavetail’s buttocks and the stringy flanks of the roan, to know the heartbreaking fight going on under his own knees. It wasn’t speed. Courage—nothing without that—but back of everything, a matter of pump, a matter of timing valves and stout walls. The last thing he thought of now was riding from the inside, yet he felt the great young heart of the stallion like a part of himself. Could it keep up this bulging and not break? Could it hold this rhythm and stroke, not spring a leak and flood the lungs? It was like another race, reaching the three-quarter post—the pale horse slipping now—Morsie Egan at his old trick with the bat.

“Whipping at three-quarters—he’ll never get home, kid. Not in this dirt, he won’t. . . . There, look out for him, he’s crossin’ us!”

Morsie, who had failed to fill the gap in the New

Leaf, was filling it now; but this time Jackie went out around, losing a foot or two to stay clear. Then at his side, he saw the sorrel's head jerk up as if in a treacherous ford—flanks yanked down by an undertow. At the same instant, through thick driving water, he smelled the clean steam of the roan.

"White Man! He's goin' out to get the General! Three-quarters done, kid—where do we come in?"

White Man was closing in on the General, the lanky Morgan boy huddled flat to carry him past. Jackie still watched the open space of sliding clay between him and the roan's tail. The next ten seconds to the stretch would tell. No chance if Black Ball lost ground now in the roan's sprint. The bursting point—two veterans ahead neck to neck.

"Youth must be served—unhurt youth!"

The bursting point—the General taking the brunt now. No change of space between Black Ball and the roan, but the General—nearer! Then it was that the cold immovable sadness Jackie had known from the beginning rose to a hot and poignant surge—General Newgate going down at his left—the blown look of heartbreak—the fall of a friend.

"Only one more, mister! Never been stretched yet—you're stretchin' now, kid. . . . Only one more—White Man, and now's the time! He thinks he's got it already, a wonder horse, kid—beat him and you've beaten the world!"

Jockey Morgan's strain had eased a trifle as he passed Newgate at the opening of the stretch. Now his head jerked back to find the long shot pressing

him to further work. He answered with the whip. That instant held for J. Bevis one of the greatest thrills of his life. As Morgan's first lash fell, Black Ball settled under him as if he were taking the gad, not the reedy flanks of the roan just ahead. The last ounce was uncorked between them. It wasn't White Man that had it, but the son of old Southey—and before a silent pavilion.

A mud man lopped forward in the saddle, getting himself in hand as well as a runaway mount. Evidently the young stallion thought he had to do it again, for they were out on the first quarter before he could be brought down to make the turn back to the judges.

The rain had stopped. Jackie sensed this as a matter of gravest importance. He straightened up and wiped his eyes. Meanings to everything—all the races of his life, run in the last five minutes—but he didn't altogether believe it yet.

Black Ball planted his feet and vented a fierce snort—matters he hadn't approved of at all—that first cut on his flanks, the snap of the tape, whipping finishes. He yanked his head about. There it was:

1. Black Ball.
2. White Man.
3. General Newgate.

Jackie laughed.

Now he was on foot in the mud, Mr. Rosswell's black boys having taken over the winner. It seemed a mile rather than a sixteenth to the paddock lane.

He looked into the inclosure as he passed. It wasn't empty. He became aware that she would have let him go on in silence if he hadn't looked. But now that he halted, she came toward him.

"Oh, Jackie, you were duth 'plendid!"

"Don't! I'm all mud."

"Dothn't matter—only my raincoat—and now you can retht!"

Studious discipline of four years, but her tongue had lost its new cunning.

Too much for the mud man—the old lisp. He was running toward his quarters—impossible to walk now. . . . He saw them rubbing down the stallion. Another blow-out from the distended nostrils.

"He's thinking it over," Jackie laughed.

The little electric heater glowed red in the early dark—all hatefulness burned out of the small neat room, three persons present.

"What gets to me, Mr. Rosswell, is that I steered you off from playing him straight. At least I might have kept my mouth shut."

"It was yo' real care for me. Not for a minute did I fail to appreciate that. But I was headstrong, and sorely tempted by the compellin' difference between twenty-four to one for straight and eight to one for place."

"You really did get in then—while it was good?"

"A trifle, suh—a trifle. But I nevah could have done it if I'd waited another day—nevah could have risked a pahtner's money thataway."

"You knew about that—this morning?"

"Yesterday, suh, Millie told me. Mighty hard to bear with my wajahs laid and yo' advisin' so urgent. In fact I wasn't restin' freely last night—until the rain. . . . And now we'd bettah go and see if Marse Black Ball is tucked in comfortable. He'll be travelin' soon and needs his rest."

They went to the stall. The black muzzle helped to push open the upper half of the door as the catch released. The big head pushed out, paying no attention to the callers. For breathless seconds he watched the moving lights on the long bridge—chain of motor cars crawling back from Old Town to the border customs. The head jerked higher. They felt his feet plant. A compressed volume suddenly forced out past their faces.

"He's gettin' it all straight in his haid."

"He's sure full of fun," Jackie laughed.

LIGHTNING

BY

ZANE GREY

RARE indeed are judges of horseflesh more competent than is Zane Grey. The demands of his work, coupled with his inherent love of animals, have caused him to know them as have few men—a knowledge apparent in "Lightning."

LIGHTNING¹

"REWARD: \$500 will be paid for the death of Lightning, leader of the Sevier range of wild horses." "Utah Cattle Company."

This notice, with a letter, coming by stage and messenger to the Stewarts, brightened what had been a dull prospect. Seldom did a whole year's work, capturing and corralling mustangs in the cañons and on the plateaus, pay them half as much as the reward offered for this one stallion. The last season had been a failure altogether. A string of pintos and mustangs, representing months of hazardous toil, had climbed out of a cañon corral and escaped to their old haunts. So on the strength of this opportunity the brothers packed and rode out of Fredonia across the Arizona line into Utah.

Two days took them beyond and above the Pink Cliffs to the White Sage plateau, and there the country became new to them. From time to time a solitary sheepherder, encountered with his flocks on a sage slope, set them in the right direction, and on the seventh day they reached Bain, the most southerly of the outposts of the big Utah ranches. It consisted of a water hole, a corral, a log-cabin, and some range riders.

Generally mustang wranglers, men who lived by

¹ Copyright, by Zane Grey.

catching mustangs, were held in contempt by the rangers and cowboys of that ironbound desert country. For mustangs were harder to catch than deer, and when captured and broken brought only a few dollars per head. The Stewarts, however, though they had never earned any money to speak of, were famous all over the two States. Stories of their wonderful pursuits, of their fleet mustangs, and trailing hounds, had become camp-fire gossip on the ranges, so their advent at Bain aroused interest.

Lee and Cuth Stewart were tall, lean Mormons, as bronzed as desert Navajos, cool, silent, gray-eyed, still-faced. Both wore crude homespun garments much the worse for wear; boots that long before had given the best in them; laced leather wristbands thin and shiny from contact with lassoes; and old gray slouch hats that would have disgraced cowboys. But this threadbare effect did not apply to the rest of the outfit, which showed a care that must have been in proportion to its hard use. And the five beautiful mustangs, Bess in particular, proved that the Stewarts were Indians at the end of every day, for they certainly had camped where there were grass and water. The pack of hounds shared interest with the mustangs, and the leader, a great yellow, somber-eyed hound, Dash by name, could have made friends with everybody had he felt inclined.

"We calculated, boys," held forth the foreman, "thet if anybody could round up Lightnin' an' his bunch it'd be you. Every ranger between here an' Marysvale has tried an' failed. Lightnin' is a rare cute stallion. He

has more than hoss sense. It's the opinion of a good many of us fellers thet he wasn't born wild, an' thet he come into this country somewhere from Nevada. Fer two years now no one has been in rifle shot of him, fer the word has long since gone out to kill him.

"It's funny to think how many rangers have tried to corral him, trap him, or run him down. He's been a heap of trouble to all the ranchers. He goes right into a bunch of hosses, fights an' kills the stallions, an' leads off what he wants of the rest. His band is scattered all over, an' no man can count 'em, but he's got at least five hundred hosses off the ranges. An' he's got to be killed or there won't be a safe grazin' spot left in Sevier County."

"How're we to know this hoss's trail when we do cross it?" asked Lee Stewart.

"You can't miss it. His right fore-track hes a notch that bites in clean every step he takes. One of my rangers came in yesterday an' reported fresh sign of Lightnin' at Cedar Springs, sixteen miles north along the red ridge there. An' he's goin' straight fer his hidin' place. Whenever he's been hard chased he hits it back up there an' lays low fer a while. It's rough country, though I reckon it won't be to you cañon fellers."

"How about water?"

"Good chances fer water beyond Cedar, I reckon, though I don't know any springs. It's rare an' seldom any of us ever work up as far as Cedar. A scaly country up thet way—black sage, an' thet's all."

The Stewarts reached Cedar Springs that afternoon.

It was a hot place; a few cedars, struggling for existence, lifted dead twisted branches to the sun; a scant growth of grass greened the few shady spots, and a thin stream of water ran between glistening borders of alkali. A drove of mustangs had visited the spring since dawn and had obliterated all tracks made before.

While Cuth made camp Lee changed his saddle to another mustang and rode up the ridge. His idea was to get a look at the country. The climb was not particularly steep, but it was long and took time, as he had to pick his way and zigzag the bare, stony slopes. At last he reached the top and caught a breath of cool wind. From where he stood the ridge wound northward, growing rougher and higher. Other ridges rolled to meet it from the left; to the right shelved off the desert, gray, patched, dim. Far northward a long, black plateau leveled the horizon, and at each end a snow-capped peak shone coldly in the sun. Lee regretted that this vantage point was not higher, but he fixed in his mind as best he could the lay of the land and returned to camp.

"We're jest on the edge of wild-hoss country," he announced to Cuth. "Thet stallion probably had a picked bunch an' was drivin' them higher up. It's gettin' hot these days an' the browse is witherin'. I seen old deer sign on the ridge, an' cougar, an' coyote sign trailin' after. They're all makin' fer higher up. I reckon we'll find 'em all on Sevier plateau.

"Did you see the plateau?" asked Cuth.

"Plain. Near a hundred miles away yet. Jest a long flat ridge black with timber. Then there's the

two snow peaks, Terrill an' Hilgard, pokin' up their cold noses. I reckon the plateau rises off these ridges, an' the Sevier River an' the mountains are on the other side. So we'll push on fer the plateau. We might come up with Lightnin' and his bunch."

All the next day they rode up the hard-packed trail winding along the base of the ridge. It was a long, gradual ascent, with the ridge ever growing rockier and more rugged and the desert slipping below. Cedar trees flourished toward the close of the day's march and then merged their yellow-green with the fresh dark green of the piñons. Sunset was time for camp and found them halting at a little water hole among a patch of cedars and boulders.

Cuth slipped the packs and Lee measured out the oats. On a hard trail the brothers always packed grain for their mounts. The fact that the mustangs when eating grain were also eating the profits of a trip never entered into the Stewart's calculations. The horses first, then the hounds, and then themselves—that was the way of the "mustang wranglers." Having ministered to the wants of their dumb friends, Lee and Cuth set about getting supper for themselves.

Cuth had the flour and water mixed to a nicety and Lee had the Dutch oven on some red-hot coals when, moved by a common instinct, they stopped work and looked up.

The five mustangs were not munching their oats; their heads were up. Bess, the keenest of the quintet, moved restlessly and then took a few steps toward the opening in the cedars.

"Bess!" called Lee, sternly. The mare stopped.

"She's got a scent," whispered Cuth, reaching for his rifle. "Mebbe it's a cougar."

"Mebbe, but I never knowed Bess to go lookin' up one. . . . Hist! Look at Dash!"

The yellow hound had risen from among his pack and stood warily shifting his nose. He sniffed the wind, turned round and round, and slowly stiffened with his head pointing up the ridge. The other hounds caught something, at least the manner of their leader, and became restless.

"Down, Dash, down," said Lee, and then with a smile to Cuth, "Did you hear it?"

"Hear what?"

"Listen!"

The warm breeze came down in puffs from the ridge; it rustled the cedars and blew fragrant whiffs of smoke into the hunters' faces, and presently it bore a call, a low, prolonged call. Cuth rose noiselessly to his feet and stood still. So horses, hounds, and men waited listening. The sound broke the silence again, much clearer, a keen, sharp whistle. The third time it rang down from the summit of the ridge, splitting the air, strong, trenchant, the shrill, fiery call of a challenging stallion. Bess reared an instant straight up and came down quivering.

"Look!" whispered Lee, tensely.

On the summit of the bare ridge stood a noble horse clearly silhouetted against the purple and gold of sunset sky. He was an iron-gray, and he stood wild

and proud, with long silver-white mane waving in the wind.

"Lightnin'!" exclaimed Cuth.

He stood there one moment, long enough to make a picture for the wild-horse hunters that would never be forgotten; then he moved back along the ridge and disappeared. Other horses, blacks and bays, showed above the sage for a moment, and they, too, passed out of sight.

"I couldn't never shoot thet stallion," whispered Lee.

"No more could I," replied Cuth. "Now, what do you make of thet whistlin'?"

"Jest grazin' along easy like. The wind sure favors us. He came to the hilltop an' jest snorted down, like a stallion will, to let anything as might be there know he could lick it. Thet whistle of his was jest plain fight. But, Lord! Wasn't he a beauty? I never saw such a hoss, never, an' never any as could come near him."

"He sure was pretty. An', Lee, to my way of thinkin' he jest might hev winded our mustangs, Bess, anyhow. You know how we've hed proof of scents between hosses as passed all our understandin'. Bess might need watchin'."

Lee shook his head gravely. "Mebbe. It was kinder strange. But if we can't trust Bess, we can't never trust a hoss again. I reckon we better lay low to-night. Keep the hounds and hosses in an' get an early start fer the next water hole. Thet bunch'll drink to-morrer or next day if they ain't scared."

Before daylight the brothers were up and at dawn filed out of the cedar grove. The trained horses scarcely rattled a stone, and the hounds trotted ahead unmindful of foxs and rabbits brushed out of the sage.

The morning passed and the afternoon waned. Green willows began to skirt the banks of a sandy wash and the mustangs sniffed as they smelled water. Presently the Stewarts entered a rocky corner refreshingly bright and green with grass, trees, and flowers and pleasant with the murmur of bees and fall of water. A heavily flowing spring gushed from under a cliff, dashed down over stones to form a pool, and ran out to seep away and lose itself in the sandy wash. Flocks of blackbirds chattered around the pool and rabbits darted everywhere.

"It'd take a hull lot of chasin' to drive a mustang from comin' regular to thet spring," commented Cuth.

"Shure, it's a likely place, an' we can make a corral here in short order."

They hobbled their mustangs and then set to work on the corral. The plan was to drop cedar trees around the pool and leave an opening at the most favorable point, which was a wide-beaten trail. By nightfall they had the pool inclosed, except on the upper side where the water tumbled over a jumble of rocks, a place no horse could climb out, and on the lower side where they left the opening for the gate. The gate was the important part and now presented a problem.

"We can't do no more to-night," said Lee, "an' we'll hev' to take chances on the stallion comin' down to

drink. Mebbe it'll be a couple of days before he comes, an' thet'll give us time to fix up a gate an' strengthen the weak places in the fence."

All that night Lee and Cuth lay under the shadow of the corral, waiting and watching. The next morning they climbed the ridge and brought down three long pine poles. These they fashioned into a gate, and as it was found impossible to swing such a ponderous affair they concluded to let it lie flat before the opening, to be raised quickly after the wild mustangs had gone in to drink. In the afternoon the hunters slept with only Dash on guard; at nightfall they were ready and waiting for their quarry.

What little breeze there was favored their position, and the night promised to be clear and starlit. In the early hours a prowling coyote howled lonesomely and deer came down to drink. Later, soft-footed animals slipped with padlike tread over the stones to the spring. At midnight the breeze failed and a dead stillness set in. It was not broken until the afterpart of the night, and then, suddenly, by the shrill, piercing neigh of a mustang. The Stewarts raised themselves sharply and looked at each other in the starlight.

"Did you hear thet?" asked Lee.

"I jest did. Sounded like Bess."

"It was Bess, darn her black hide. She never did thet before."

"Mebbe she's winded Lightnin'."

"Mebbe. But she ain't hobbled, an' if she'd whistle like thet fer him she's liable to make off after him. Now, what to do?"

"It's too late. I warned you before. We can't spoil what may be a chance to get the stallion. Let Bess alone. Many's the time she's had a chance to make off an' didn't do it. Let's wait."

"Reckon it's all we can do now. If she called that stallion, it proves one thing—we can't never break a wild mare perfectly. The wild spirit may sleep in her blood, mebbe fer years, but some time it'll answer to—"

"Shet up—listen!" interrupted Cuth.

In the strained moments following there was no sound, and no movement till Dash put his nose high and turned slowly in a circle. His significant action meant to the hunters that he had passed the uneasy stage prior to the certainty of a scent and was now baffled only by the direction.

"There!" whispered Lee.

From far up on the ridge came down the faint rattling of stones.

"Mustangs—an' they're comin' down," replied Cuth.

Long experience had brought the brothers patience, but moments such as these, waiting in the shadow, had never come to be tranquil. Presently sharp clicks preceded the rattles, and when these sounds grew together and became louder the hearts of the hunters began to quicken. The sounds merged into a regular rhythmic tramp. It came down the ridge, softened in the sandy wash below the spring, opened up again with a steady click and thump, and came straight for the corral.

"I see 'em!" whispered Cuth.

Lee answered by a pressure of his hand. It was an anxious moment, for the mustangs had to pass hunters

and hounds before entering the gate. A black bobbing line wound out of the cedars. Then the starlight showed the line to be the mustangs marching in single file. They passed with drooping heads, hurrying a little toward the last, and unsuspectingly entered the corral gate.

"Twenty odd," whispered Lee, "but all blacks an' bays. The leader wasn't in thet. Mebbe it wasn't his—"

Among the cedars rose the peculiar halting thump of hobbled horses trying to cover ground, and following that snorts and crashings of brush and the pound of plunging hoofs. Then out of the cedars moved two shadows, the first a great gray horse with snowy mane, and the second a small, graceful, shiny black mustang. Lightning and Bess! The stallion, in the fulfillment of a conquest such as had made him famous on the wild ranges, was magnificent in action and mien. Wheeling about her, whinnying, cavorting, he arched his splendid neck and pushed his head against her. His importunity was that of a master.

Suddenly Bess snorted and whirled down the trail. Lightning whistled one short blast of anger or terror and thundered after the black. Bess was true to her desert blood at the last. They vanished in the gray shadow of the cedars, as a stream of frightened mustangs poured out of the corral in a clattering roar.

Gradually the dust settled. Cuth looked at Lee and Lee looked at Cuth. For a while neither spoke. Cuth generously forbore saying: "I told you so." The failure of their plan was only an incident of horse

wrangling and in no wise discomfited them. But Lee was angry at his favorite.

"You was right, Cuth," he said. "Thet mare played us at the finish. Ketched when she was a yearling, broke the best of any mustang we ever had, trained with us fer five years, an' helped down many a stallion—an' she runs off wild with thet big, white-maned brute!"

"Well, they make a team an' they'll stick," replied Cuth. "An' so'll we stick, if we have to chase him to the Great Salt-Basin."

Next morning when the sun tipped the ridge rosy red Lee put the big yellow hound on the notched track of the stallion, and the long trail began. At noon the hunters saw him heading his blacks across a rising plain, the first step of the mighty plateau stretching to the northward. As they climbed, grass and water became more frequent along the trail. For the most part Lee kept on the tracks of the mustang leader without the aid of the hound; Dash was used in the grass and on the scaly ridges where the trail was hard to find.

The succeeding morning Cuth spied Lightning watching them from a high point. Another day found them on top of the plateau, among the huge brown pine trees and patches of snow and clumps of aspen. It took two days to cross the plateau—sixty miles. Lightning did not go down, but doubled on his trail. Rimming a plateau was familiar work for the hunters, and twice they came within sight of the leader and his band. Once a bunch of mustangs trooped out of a hollow

and went over the wall, down on the back trail. The stallion was not among them, and Dash did not split but kept straight on into the timber.

"He's broke up his band—cut out some," commented Lee.

"Wait till he takes to weathered stone, then we'll see," replied Cuth.

Lightning crossed the plateau again and struck down into the valley. The trail was a long steep slope of weathered stone, and the pursuers zigzagged it with the ease of long practice in the canyon country. Many times the great stallion could be seen looking back. Evidently this steady pursuit puzzled him. After these surveys he always plunged away in a cloud of dust. He crossed the Sevier valley to the river and turned back. The river was raging from thaws in the mountains. Then he struck up the valley.

Another day put his pursuers high up among the slides of snow and silver spruces, and another across a divide into a rugged country of bad lands where barrens began to show and high mesas lifted flat heads covered with patches of sage and gray-green cedars. So it went on day by day, but Lightning turned back no more. He had marked a straight course, though every mile of it grew wilder. Sometimes for hours the hunters had him in sight, and always beside him was the little black they knew to be Bess.

There came a day when Lightning cut out all of his band except Bess, and they went on alone. They made a spurt and lost the trailers from sight for two days. Then Bess dropped a shoe and the pursuers

came up. As she grew lamer and lamer the stallion showed his mettle. He did not quit her, but seemed to grow more cunning as pursuit closed in on them, choosing the open places where he could see far, and browsing along, covering rods where formerly he had covered miles.

One day the trail disappeared on stony ground, and there Dash came in for his share. Behind them the Stewarts climbed a very high round-topped mesa, buttressed and rimmed by cracked cliffs. It was almost insurmountable. They reached the summit by a narrow water-course, to find a wild and lonesome level inclosed by crags and gray walls. There were cedars and fine thin grass growing on the plateau.

"Corralled!" said Lee, laconically, as his keen eye swept the surroundings. "He's never been here before, an' there's no way off this mesa except by the back trail, which we'll close."

After fencing the split in the wall the brothers separated and rode around the rim of the mesa. Lightning had reached the end of his trail; he was caught in a trap. Lee saw him flying like a gleam through the cedars, and suddenly came upon Bess limping painfully along. He galloped up, roped her, and led her, a tired and crippled mustang, back to the place selected for camp.

"Played out, eh?" said Cuth, as he smoothed the dusty neck. "Wal, Bess, you can rest up an' help us ketch the stallion. There's good grazin' here, an' we can go down for water."

For their operations the hunters chose the highest

part of the mesa, a level cedar forest. Opposite a rampant of the cliff wall they cut a curved line of cedars, dropping them together to form a dense, impassable fence. This enclosed a good space free from trees. From the narrowest point, some twenty yards wide, they cut another line of cedars running diagonally back a mile into the center of the mesa. With this labor, and going down every day to take the mustangs to water, nearly a week elapsed. But time was of no moment to the Stewarts. Every day Bess was getting better, and Lightning more restive. They heard him crashing through the cedars, and saw him standing in open spots, with his silver mane flying and his head turned over his shoulder watching, always watching.

"It'd be something to find out how long thet stallion could go without waterin'," commented Lee. "But we'll make his tongue hang out to-morrow! An' jes fer spite we'll break him with Black Bess."

Daylight came cool and misty; the veils unrolled in the valleys, and the purple curtains of the mountains lifted to the snow peaks and became clouds; and then the red sun burned out of the east.

"If he runs this way," said Lee, as he mounted Black Bess, "drive him back. Don't let him in the corral till he's tired."

The mesa sloped slightly eastward and the cedar forest soon gave place to sage and juniper. At the extreme eastern point of the mesa Lee jumped Lightning out of a clump of bushes. A race ensued for half the length of the sage flat, then the stallion made into

the cedars and disappeared. Lee slowed down, trotting up the easy slope, and cut across somewhat to the right. Not long afterwards he heard Cuth yelling and saw Lightning tearing through the scrub. Lee went on to the point where he had left Cuth and waited.

Soon the pound of hoofs thudded through the forest, coming nearer and nearer. Lightning appeared straight ahead, running easily. At sight of Lee and the black mare he snorted viciously and, veering to the left, took to the open. Lee watched him with sheer admiration. He had a beautiful stride and ran seemingly without effort. Then Cuth galloped up and reined in a spent and foaming mustang.

"Thet stallion can run some," was his tribute.

"He shure can. Change hosses now an' be ready to fall in line when I chase him back."

With that Lee coursed away and soon crossed the trail of Lightning and followed it at a sharp trot, threading in and out of the aisles and glades of the forest. He passed through to the rim and circled half the mesa before he saw the stallion again. Lightning stood on a ridge looking backward. When the hunter yelled, the stallion leaped as if he had been shot and plunged down the ridge. Lee headed to cut him off from the cedars, but he forged to the front, gained the cedar level, and twinkled in and out of the clump of trees. Again Lee slowed down to save his mustang.

Bess was warming up and Lee wanted to see what she could do at close range. Keeping within sight of Lightning, the hunter chased him leisurely round and round the forest, up and down the sage slopes, along

the walls, at last to get him headed for the only open stretch on the mesa. Lee rode across a hollow and came out on the level only a few rods behind him.

"Hi! Hi! Hi!" yelled the hunter, spurring Bess forward like a black streak. Uttering a piercing snort of terror the gray stallion lunged out, for the first time panic-stricken, and lengthened his stride in a way that was wonderful to see. Then at the right moment Cuth darted from his hiding place, whooping at the top of his voice and whirling his lasso. Lightning won that race down the open stretch, but it cost him his best.

At the turn he showed his fear and plunged wildly first to the left then to the right. Cuth pushed him relentlessly, while Lee went back, tied up Bess, and saddled Billy, a wiry mustang of great endurance. Then the two hunters remorselessly hemmed Lightning between them, turned him where they wished, at last to run him around the corner of the fence of cut cedars down the line through the narrow gate into the corral prepared for him.

"Hold here!" cried Lee at the gate. "I'll go an' drive him round an' round till he's done; then when I yell you stand to one side an' rope him as he goes out."

Lightning ran around the triangular space, plunged up the steep walls, and crashed over the dead cedars. Then as sense and courage gave way more and more to terror he broke into desperate headlong flight. He ran blindly, and every time he passed the guarded gateway, his eyes were wilder and his stride more labored.

"Hi! Hi! Hi!" yelled Lee.

Cuth pulled out of the opening and hid behind the line of cedars, his lasso swinging loosely. Lightning saw the vacated opening and sprang forward with a hint of his old speed. As he passed through, a yellow loop flashed in the sun, circling, narrowing, and he seemed to run right into it. The loop whipped close around the glossy neck and the rope stretched taut. Cuth's mustang staggered under the violent shock, went to his knees, but struggled up and held firmly. Lightning reared aloft.

Then Lee, darting up in a cloud of dust, shot his lasso. The noose nipped the right foreleg of the stallion. He plunged and for an instant there was a wild straining struggle, then he fell heavily and groaning. Lee sprang off his horse and, slipping the rope that threatened to strangle Lightning, replaced it by a stout halter and made this fast to a cedar.

The Stewarts stood back and gazed at their prize. Lightning was badly spent, but not to a dangerous point; he was wet with foam but no fleck of blood appeared; his superb coat showed scratches, but none cut the flesh. He was up after a while, panting heavily and trembling in all his muscles. He was a beaten horse, but he showed no viciousness, only the wild fear of a trapped animal. He eyed Bess, then the hunters, and last the halter.

"Lee, will you look at him! Will you jest look at thet mane!" ejaculated Cuth.

"Wal," replied Lee, "I reckon thet reward, an' then some, can't buy him."

HORSES
BY
JAMES STEVENS

THE tales of James Stevens are individual in the gusty flavor of their strength. The epic "Paul Bunyan" brought him recognition; "Brawn-ymen" and "Mattock" made secure his place as a man with much to say.

HORSES ¹

As a boy in a prairie town I early learned to revere the work-horse. To me, as to all boys, a dog was a slave, but a horse was a hero. And the men who handled him were heroes, too. On summer Saturday mornings I would lie in the grass under a maple tree, drowse in the heavy prairie heat, and watch the town-going farmers pass. The surrey and buggy teams never touched my fancy; I could see such light, lively horses any day in the town streets and in the livery barn. And the rough-haired, scrawny, hungry-eyed teams of the shiftless Soap Crickers were beneath notice, of course. But let me catch sight of a team of work horses such as Mister Barrick drove; and then how I would lift my head, prop my chin on my fists, look with wide eyes, and feel the glow of a waking dream!

The road, with a cloddy ridge in the center and a wheel-marked path on each side, ran straight down a small hill and twisted sharply into the green trees of Elm Hollow. From these trees sounded the lusty rumble of a lumber-wagon and the jingle of harness. Suddenly the massive heads of two gray horses emerged from the greenery. There was a flash of polished brass from the studded ornamental tabs of leather that flapped over their wide foreheads, and a shine from the small colored rings which were strapped in their

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headstalls. Their big hoofs struck the wagon tracks forcefully as they tramped soberly on. A red neck-yoke hung from heavy breast-straps, and it swung now to the right, now to the left, as the front wheels rolled into chuck holes and jerked the tongue. At each swing there was a sharp tug at the stout oak hames of the horses, but they tramped on unwaveringly.

Their bodies came into full view. Short, thick necks, and waving curly manes. Immensely wide shoulders and deep chests, the dappled gray hair rippling over moving bands and rolls of muscle, the thick leather traces tight over the wide shoulders and fat sides. What broad, inviting backs under the brass-studded leather of the back-bands! It looked as if you could spread out a bed on one of their backs and go to sleep there. The breeching slipped from broad hip to broad hip and tightened and loosened over round, thick buttocks. The gray tails, brushed glossy and clean by Mister Barrick, swung out in sweeping waves at the pestiferous summer flies.

The wheels of the rumbling wagon were yellow; the wagon box was green, with strips and curlicues of red for decoration. The spring seat slanted to the right under the weight of Mister Barrick. He himself was a regular work-horse of a man. A straw hat shaded his eyes, a brown beard curled over his cheeks and chin, and between suspenders and sleeve-holders muscles bulged the cloth of his hickory shirt. He rode with a straight back, and he drove with tight lines. Mister Barrick was as proud of himself as he was of his clean wagon and fat, glossy work-horses.

How great and strong Bob and Jake appeared as they plodded into the shade of my maple tree! They were the strongest and most dangerous horses in the whole country, but Mister Barrick could do anything with them. I knew, for he often let me ride with him on the days when he hauled milk to the cheese factory. "Whoa-ah!" he would say, and the big gray horses would stop dead still as soon as he said it. And they certainly didn't dare to make a move while I was climbing up and up, just about twenty-five feet, to the spring seat. And then, when Mister Barrick clucked and said, "Giddap!" those horses stepped ahead before the word was out of his mouth.

There couldn't be anything more exciting than to ride with Mister Barrick to the cheese factory. You were so high in the air that if you were to fall off it would certainly break every bone in your body. And Bob and Jake were so dangerous and strong that if they were to run away—and they were ready to break and go at the least excuse, Mister Barrick said—they would simply smash everything behind them to smithereens.

"I have to be on the watch every second," Mister Barrick would say. "They ain't ay-nother man around who could hold 'em."

And I'd feel his muscle and notice how big his hands looked around the lines; and I'd stare at the broad backs and broader hips of the horses as they tramped soberly on; and I'd get to feeling that I was no bigger than a fly, and that Bob and Jake were the greatest horses in the world, and that Mister Barrick was the

greatest of heroes to handle them as he did. I played horse a lot; and whenever I did I was always Mister Barrick driving Bob and Jake to the cheese factory.

On Saturday Mister Barrick hauled nothing but produce to sell at the stores. He never asked me to ride with him then. But he spoke to me as he drove into the shade of my maple tree. He looked down soberly from the great height of the wagon seat, and his voice boomed through his brown curly beard:

"Mornin', bub. How air yuh? Still a Democrat, I s'pose."

Mister Barrick and I agreed on almost everything but politics.

"Good mornin', Mister Barrick," I said. "I'm fine as silk and I'm still a Democrat. And how are you and Bob and Jake?"

"Perty well, thankly. And Bob and Jake is wild and dangerous as ever they was. Ef I didn't watch 'em like a hawk they'd leave nothin' of me but a grease spot!"

The last words were spoken loudly over his shoulder. I only watched and dreamed then, while Mister Barrick and his big, fat horses turned a corner and moved out of sight. It made my heart pound whenever Jake threw his big head down, snorted against his knees and chomped the bit. Wasn't he a savage, though! And Bob was about as bad. What a brave, strong man Mister Barrick was! I'd dream I was away up there in his place, watching Bob and Jake with the eye of a hawk; and didn't I hold them down, though, when they tried to break and run . . . !

"Just to think of you driving that terrible big team!" exclaimed Inez Hartley, the banker's beautiful daughter. "I'd never imagined you could do anything so wonderful!"

"Fear not. It is nothing," I replied calmly. "Robert and Jacob know their master."

"But I fear to go riding with you through the wood," said the banker's beautiful daughter. "Are there not redskins lurking in the wood?"

"Fear not," I replied sternly. "Robert and Jacob will bear us safely through all perils. I will have you fly with me, Inez—"

"Preacher's stuck on Inez! Haw! Haw! Haw! Preacher's stuck on Inez!"

Robert and Jacob and the banker's beautiful daughter vanished at the sound of Stub Crumley's voice. With a vile grin on his wretched freckled face, he leered down at me as I rolled over in the grass.

"Talkin' to hisself about Inez Hartley! Haw! Haw! Haw!"

He stepped closer; and I grabbed his bare leg; and after we had wrasseled around in the grass for ten minutes we were having so much fun that we both forgot about Robert and Jacob and the banker's beautiful daughter. At dinner time we made it up to go to the town square together to spend the long lazy afternoon.

II

In the center of the town square was a small park. It was fenced by chains bolted to stout posts. Every

summer Saturday afternoon the park was circled by farmers' teams, which were hitched to the chains. Many of us town boys would gather in the park after Saturday dinner; and our first activity, as a rule, was to look over the teams and argue about the horses. Some of the boys were familiar with horses and were brave enough to pet the most sleepy-eyed ones. Sometimes we would climb into wagons and pretend that we were stage-coaching it through the Far West. But we never got to play in Mister Barrick's wagon on Saturday afternoons. He always put Bob and Jake in the livery barn.

All of the farmers who took good care of their horses did the same; and the poorer farmers who left their teams at the park always gathered at the livery barn to chew the rag for a spell before they started for home. The town boys always came around when the crowd began to gather. There were always interesting stories, gossip and political arguments to be heard; and usually there was a lot of instructive horse talk. I seldom missed a Saturday afternoon at the livery barn, for Mister Barrick was a friend of mine, and he was always the leader in the arguments about horses. But he was never too interested or excited to stop his talk for a second, grin down through his brown curly beard at me, and say, "How air yuh, bub?"

Stub Crumley didn't have anything to say about Inez Hartley then. He would only look at me with humble envy for being so familiar with Mister Barrick, who was listened to by everybody in the livery barn as he proved to a man who drove Morgans how superior

Percherons were to Morgans, and to Clydes, Belgians and French Coaches as well.

His argument was particularly warm this afternoon, because Humbert, the famous thousand-dollar Percheron stallion, was due at the livery barn. Humbert had been advertised like an opera-house show; big cards showing a fine picture of him had been tacked up at the livery barn and the feed store two weeks before. The description was high-sounding poetry, but the town boys made out from it that Humbert was a foreigner, a genuine French horse. We talked a great deal about Humbert; he had been brought clear across the ocean, and he was worth such a pile of money! And he looked so tremendously big and so awfully wild and dangerous in his picture that I asked Mister Barrick if, taking it all around and by and large, he wasn't more of a horse than Bob and Jake.

"Shucks, no," said Mister Barrick solemnly. "Shucks, no. Bob and Jake are work-horses. And Humbert never done a tap of work in his life. How can you ask if he is a better horse?"

"What's Humbert good for then, Mister Barrick, if he ain't strong and dangerous like Bob and Jake are?" I asked. "Why do they brag him up so much then?"

"He's the best Perch'on stallion in the county, that's why," said Mister Barrick.

Being just an eight-year-old town boy, Perch'on stallion meant nothing to me; but the words sounded fine, and I thought Humbert must be something wonderful.

And now Humbert was being driven into the livery

barn. He was wonderful; anybody could see that. Humbert was every bit as big as Bob or Jake, and he *looked* a lot more dangerous and strong. How the muscles rolled under his glossy dappled gray hair! What a thick neck he had, and how he did curve it as he tossed his head, snorted and cavorted around! Humbert wouldn't stand still, but kept up a kind of heavy dance. There was the wickedest flash in his eye, as he rolled his gaze toward the crowd, snorting all the time.

"I hear he killed a man in Des Moines," said the Morgan man to Mister Barrick. "That's why they brought him down here."

"I don't believe it," declared Mister Barrick. "Perch'ons is the gentlest horses alive, even the studs."

I laughed to myself, for I knew that Mister Barrick was only coddling the Morgan man. Mister Barrick had told me too many times how dangerous Bob and Jake were for me to swallow any talk about Percherons being so gentle as all that.

Still, I was considerably puzzled; for if Humbert was so strong, why was he hitched to a cart that I could have pulled myself? Mister Barrick's wagon was a thousand times heavier. And that fat, red-faced man who was driving Humbert looked like he didn't have any muscle at all and had never done a lick of work in his life. Humbert couldn't be so dangerous if this man handled him. I'd never thought actually that I could handle Bob and Jake; but if this little fat man could handle Humbert, I expected I could too. He couldn't be so much—

Just then Humbert commenced to faunch around, snorting and shaking his head, and stamping so hard on the floor that he shook the whole barn; and then he let out a neigh that was a regular ripper; and even Mister Barrick backed away with the other farmers. But the little fat man just took hold of Humbert's bit and talked low to him. In no time at all the stallion was quieted down.

"He's a whisperer," said the Morgan man. "Best horse-handler in the county."

Then Humbert was unhitched and the little fat man led him down between the rows of dark stalls. Humbert neighed again in his wild way as he was led along. The livery man chased us boys from the barn.

"You young uns skedaddle!" he said sharply.

"I guess they're goin' to have a horse fight, maybe," I said, as we walked reluctantly away.

Bill Huff, a ten-year-old boy who had lived on a farm, began to laugh like a fool, and he waggled his finger under my nose.

"Preacher thinks they's goin' to be a horse fight!" he jeered. "Jest lis'en! Preacher thinks they's goin' to be a horse fight!"

Some of the older boys began to laugh and jeer too, or I'd have shown Bill Huff how smart he was right then and there. But I wasn't fool enough to try to show a whole gang how smart they were; so I got Stub Crumley, and we went home and played catch in an alley until supper time. But every once in a while I'd wonder about Humbert. He was a mystery to me, and he stayed so for a long time.

III

It wasn't so long, however, until I got on more familiar terms with Bob and Jake. My folks planned a three-day visit to the county seat. I was to stay with a neighbor until they returned. I didn't like the idea, and I told Mister Barrick so one morning when I rode with him to the cheese factory.

"Why don't you come out and stay with me and maw?" said Mister Barrick. "We'd take keer of you, and I 'low you'd be a lot of help, too."

That idea certainly excited me; and when I got home I bawled until it was agreed that I should have my way. Two days later I was riding behind Bob and Jake as they tramped over a road that twisted and turned and led up and down through fields of timothy, clover and corn, past orchards, pastures and ponds. Mister Barrick didn't say much, except to answer my questions; and after about an hour I got tired of asking questions, and just looked around at the country and dreamed.

The sky was a hazy blue, the sun seemed to just pour its light down, and the air was still, thick and hot. It was easy to drowse. The green blades of the young corn were quiet, and the heads of timothy on long slender stems were quiet, too. When we passed an orchard I could hear all kinds of buzzy sounds in the deep grass among the trees. I could hear every plomp of the horses' feet in the dusty road. Each wheel had a rumble of its own as it bumped along. Sweat stains spread over the backs of Bob

and Jake, where the backbands and breeching pressed. A sharp and rather strong smell came up from them.

I got to looking as far out and away as I could. Over yonder some red cattle were lying in the shade of elm trees on the bank of a pond. The water of the pond looked cool and the green grass of the pasture was like a smooth carpet—I'd like to wade through that grass barefooted, I thought, and then go swimming in the pond with Stub Crumley: it was so blamed hot and drowsy. Beyond the pond was the biggest cornfield I had ever seen. It ran away and away, out into the hazy sky. A man was cultivating the young corn. His team plodded and plodded on until there was only one small speck and two larger ones where the green of the field and the blue of the sky melted together in a haze.

I looked out at the specks and tried to fancy some fine things about them; and then it did seem as though I was in a cornfield myself. But I wasn't on a cultivator; I was on a cart, and I was driving Humbert, who seemed to have become the best-natured horse alive, for he would turn his head, wink his bright eye, and smile in the friendliest way every once in a while as I drove him on toward the far haze. The cart rolled on very smoothly, and Humbert looked friendlier every time he smiled back at me; and I knew that we were going on and on through the corn until we reached the Chariton River; and there I'd find Inez Hartley, the banker's beautiful daughter; and wouldn't she be proud and surprised to see me driving Humbert, and wouldn't we have the happiest time. . . !

"Wake up, young un. We're 'most home."

I blinked at the sound of Mister Barrick's voice. I felt that my head was resting on something hard and yet alive—and then I discovered that I'd been asleep and was lying against Mister Barrick's strong left arm. He looked down very kindly as I straightened myself and yawned.

"I pert' nigh went to sleep myself," said Mister Barrick. "It's that hot. And ef I had I bet Bob and Jake wouldn't of left more'n two grease spots of us!"

He stopped the team then, for he had reached his gate. Mister Barrick stepped down to the wheel and jumped to the ground. I was scared half to death right then, for he had left the lines in my hands. Never had Bob and Jake looked so big. Never, it seemed, had I been so high in the air. But somehow I held my breath and clutched the big lines tightly as Mister Barrick opened the gate. He clucked and Bob and Jake moved ahead. The lines tugged at my hands. The spring seat swayed under me. The wheels jolted over a culvert. Far below I saw Mister Barrick as the wagon passed the gate. Ahead was a barn lot as big as a hay field, and a monster barn. Bob and Jake were sticking up their ears. Oh, lordy, what would happen now? I shut my eyes.

"Stop 'em, bub," called Mister Barrick.

Somehow I got out a weak whoa-ah; and I had never felt so good in my life as I did when Bob and Jake stopped dead still. Then Mister Barrick walked on toward the barn. The horses tramped soberly be-

hind him. Nobody was holding their lines but me! And suddenly I felt a thrill of reckless joy. Let 'em run and leave only a grease spot of me, if they wanted to—maybe they wouldn't run, either—and if they didn't, and I came through alive, what I would have to tell to the town boys! I was driving the biggest, strongest and most dangerous team in the whole county! Shucks, they were not going to run; they saw Mister Barrick ahead of them, and they knew they hadn't better. And for a good minute I had the most fun I ever had had. And I certainly hated it when Bob and Jake got to the place where Mister Barrick always unhitched. I wanted to help him unhitch, but he sent me on to the house.

"You tell maw I said fer you to have some cookies and milk," said Mister Barrick.

Mrs. Barrick seemed very glad to see me, though she had a sharp, cranky way of talking. She had to get around the house in a wheel-chair, as she had been crippled in a runaway a little while after she and Mister Barrick were married. Mister Barrick had shot the runaway horses and had hated fast ones ever since, people said. She managed to do her own kitchen work, wheeling her chair around, and Mister Barrick did all the house-cleaning.

Mrs. Barrick was in her wheel-chair on the back porch when I came up to the farm-house. There were morning glory vines all over the back porch, and her chair was in the shade. When I told her what Mister Barrick had said she snapped: "Law! That man!" Then she looked me over from head to foot. "Law!

You've ripped a button from your shirt, young un. Come here till I pin it up." And after I'd let her fuss with my shirt all she wanted to, she got a kind of smile in her black eyes, and told me to go to the pantry and help myself. After I did so I came back to the porch, and Mrs. Barrick sat and smoked her pipe and asked questions, and I sat and ate cookies and drank cool milk and answered them.

The poor soul, as my folks called her, didn't get around very much, and she appreciated even a boy like me to visit with. I was polite to Mrs. Barrick and answered her questions as well as I could, but all the time I wanted to be out at the barn with Mister Barrick and Bob and Jake.

He came in after a while and built a fire in the kitchen stove. I helped Mrs. Barrick get supper, just as Mister Barrick told me to do, while he went out to get the cows in and begin the chores. Mrs. Barrick got nicer to me all the time; she asked me what I liked best to eat; and when I said, "Fried chicken and jelly layer cake and roas'in' ears, I guess," she said she'd have some to-morrow or know the reason why. I got to feeling very much at home with Mrs. Barrick, but I did want to be out at the barn. Mister Barrick might let me give Bob and Jake their corn.

But I didn't get out to the barn until the next morning. Mrs. Barrick kept thinking of new questions; and after supper it was the same thing over again as we washed the dishes; and after Mister Barrick came in we all sat in the front room, with the windows open, while Mrs. Barrick smiled at me, and asked questions.

Mister Barrick just sat in his sock feet, leaned back in his rocker, with his hands clasped behind his head most of the time, smoked his pipe, smiled at his wife and me, and said hardly a word the whole evening. I wasn't used to having so much attention paid to me, and I was proud of it, though it wasn't very exciting.

At bedtime Mister Barrick took me up to a room that had a big feather bed in it. He set the lamp on a bureau and turned the sheets down as if he was used to it. He stood in the door for a minute before he went back downstairs.

"Ain't homesick, air yuh, bub?"

"No, I ain't. Not a particle, Mister Barrick."

"That's the ticket. I 'low I have yuh help cultivate some to-morrer."

"With Bob and Jake, Mister Barrick?"

"I 'spect."

"Golly! I'm mighty glad I come out to your place, Mister Barrick!"

"Wal—good night, bub. Hope yuh sleep good. Be keerful of the light."

He stood in the door for another second, staring at me, and pulling at his beard with a big, hairy hand. Then he turned around and tramped down the stairs. I could hear him and his wife talking, and they were still talking after I was in bed.

It was so hot I didn't sleep good in the early part of the night. Once I woke up and looked out into the moonlight. I thought I saw Mister Barrick tramping up and down in the barn lot. But I was drowsy

and I dozed off again before I could think about it very much.

IV

It was fine and cool the next morning when I went out to the barn with Mister Barrick. We had eaten a good breakfast, and now we were going to feed the young stock. The cows had already been milked and fed. Bob and Jake had finished their corn and were nibbling at the timothy in their manger. They looked up and nickered when we came into the barn. Mister Barrick fetched Jake a slap on the hips as we walked behind them. I jumped a foot, for I expected Jake to kick us into pieces. But he only switched his tail. We went on through the barn and came to a pen with a shed in one side of it. There was a bed of straw in the shed; and on the straw were eight of the funniest and cutest pigs I had ever seen. They were just finishing their breakfast, and their fat mother was grunting for them to get away and leave her alone. Mister Barrick helped me into the pen; then he picked up one of the pigs and let it chew his fingers. And he told me to do the same with another. The little rascal chewed away for all he was worth, but he didn't hurt my hand the least bit. Mister Barrick and I had a lot of fun with the pigs, their mother grunting in a suspicious way all the time; and then we fed the calves skimmed milk and played with them for a while. One of the calves was a regular baby; and it was so wobbly-legged and owl-eyed, and it looked so funny and cute when it would hoist its tail and try to run, and

then stop and look at me and baa, that I'd have stayed and played with it all day if Mister Barrick hadn't needed me to help him with the cultivating.

We left the calves and fed corn to the chickens and the shoats; and then we leaned on the pasture fence for a while, and Mister Barrick showed me Bob's and Jake's mother. She was a big grey Percheron, too, and there was a frolicsome little colt with her. Her name was Grace, and the colt hadn't been given a name yet. Grace tramped up to the fence as Mister Barrick and I were talking and stood there while he scratched her neck. I tried to get the colt to come to me; but he would only stick out his nose, smell my fingers, shake his head and snort a couple of times, then back away and look at me suspiciously. He wasn't nearly so friendly as the calf was, but I liked him about as well anyhow. I certainly was enjoying myself. The air smelled sweet as it blew from the dewy pasture grass. The red and white cows were moving towards the elms that marked the pond. All over the barn lot the hens were singing their clucking songs. But the old prairie sun was beginning to warm things up.

"Time fer us to git to work," said Mister Barrick.

When he had harnessed Bob and Jake and led them out of the barn, he took me by the arm.

"Pile on, bub," he said, "and we'll ride out to the field."

"Ain't—ain't they pretty dangerous to ride, Mister Barrick?"

"Not to ride—no. Jest out on the road. You pile on old Jake now and hang to the hames."

I was scared, but I wouldn't back down; so up I went; and there I was, astraddle one of the biggest, strongest and most dangerous horses in the county, riding out to cultivate corn!

That was the most wonderful and exciting day I had ever known. I didn't only ride the big Percheron out to the cornfield; but after Mister Barrick had made a couple of rounds with the cultivator, he put me up in the seat and gave me the lines, and there I was again, driving this great team down the corn rows, their big hips looming high above me, their heads swinging gee when I pulled gee and swinging haw when I pulled haw. And they stopped when I yelled whoa and went ahead when I yelled giddap. And Mister Barrick walked so quietly behind me that I could imagine he was Inez Hartley or Stub Crumley or anybody I wanted to.

That evening I went to the field again, drove some more rounds with Mister Barrick, and helped him unhitch at six o'clock. He had brought the wagon out at noon and I got permission to drive it back. I felt that I was the boss of Bob and Jake now. They might be strong and dangerous, but I could handle them. As they neared the barn they broke into a heavy trot and I let them go. The wagon bumped and rumbled, dust rolled up from the thumping hoofs, and I declared to myself that no stage-driver of the Far West ever drove faster than I was driving then. And at supper Mister Barrick said to Mrs. Barrick:

"You ought to seen that boy handle Bob and Jake!

Ain't 'nuther boy nigh his age could handle sech a dangerous team, I bet."

"Law! How you *do* go on about Bob and Jake!" said Mrs. Barrick in her sharp way. But she smiled over at me. I was very proud; and after I'd filled up on fried chicken and jelly layer cake and roasting ears and milk I felt so good that it seemed like I had never lived at all before. I wanted to stay with Mister and Mrs. Barrick and Bob and Jake forever.

But the next two days went by so fast that I could hardly count them. Then I was in town again, with about seven hundred fine stories to tell to Stub Crumley and Inez Hartley. And I could put Bill Huff in his place, too. He might have lived on a farm once, but he had never cultivated corn with a team like Bob and Jake. He might know all about Humbert, but Mister Barrick didn't let *him* ever drive Bob and Jake through town to the cheese factory.

Mister Barrick and I were always good friends while I lived in that town. He and Mrs. Barrick always liked me to come out and stay at their place. I liked him so much that it bothered me because it seemed that he slept poorly. Several times when I was out at his place I heard him tramp to the barn in the middle of the night. Finally I asked him about it. As I might have known, it was on account of his horses.

"I worry about Bob and Jake fightin' at night," he said.

Mrs. Barrick usually spoke sharply to him for be-

ing foolish about his horses, but she didn't say a word now. And I said:

"You certainly do take fine care of your stock, Mister Barrick."

And he did. Mister Barrick seemed to love even the little pigs. But he thought the most of Bob and Jake and their mother, Grace. It was because I appreciated them so much, I guess, that he liked to have me come out to his place and always let me ride with him to the cheese factory.

A STORY AGAINST WOMEN

BY

DONN BYRNE

•“THE proper subject of conversation for an Irishman, you may have noticed, is Ireland.”

—DONN BYRNE.

A STORY AGAINST WOMEN ¹

At an Irish race course you would have seen him some years ago, and you could not have missed him. There is your assemblage in the small ring, as it is called: owners, sportsmen, officials—immaculately dressed men with glasses slung over their shoulders—gentlewomen with bronzed faces and keen eyes and clothes which but a week ago were on show in Paris; farmers in gaiters and black coats and bowler hats; bookmakers hoarse with shouting the odds. Green turf, and horses sleek and groomed like prima donnas. A race is over, the jockeys have weighed in, the bets are paid. And now the board goes up with the runners of the next race on it, and the names of their riders. A bookie raises his voice defiantly. He will give two to one against the field, he says. He will give four to one, bar one. He will give eight to one, bar two.

There is a rush for the rails, where the money is put on. The sportsmen and owners stroll up quietly and bet, as the phrase goes, "on the nod." Tick-tack men, or bookmakers' signalers, go through their motions of crazed marionettes. Around each gambler is a willing crowd offering money—small tradesmen; strong farmers peeling off notes from plethoric rolls; Irish peers in shabby tweeds, with faces red as bar-

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tenders; an occasional clergyman, and Rory O'Connor Mellon.

Consider a rather tubby man with a sharp, pointed, red beard which has strands of gray in it. On his head is a not well brushed silk hat. He wears a frock coat of the type known in America as a Prince Albert, and it is not very well brushed either. His collar is of the turned-down fashion, which I have heard somewhere described as a Shakespeare collar. His tie is black. In his left hand he holds a not well rolled umbrella. In his right hand he holds a pair of field glasses. His pocket bulges with the form book.

He had been born some forty-seven years before this in an obscure village in Meath, on the edge of the Irish central plain, as military experts call it, that vast dip of bog flower and green grass, through which the canals jog dreamily westward; where is heard only the booming of the bittern and the curlew's lonely call, and the wind moaning through the willows—bog land it is all, and under the peat of Allen lie buried the Irish elk and the Irish bear, and the Irish wolf and the wolfdog that hunted him, and the gallant invaders of old time—the brown Phœnicians and the red Danes and black-a-vised Norman men. And around the edges of royal Meath live traditions and customs and families ancient as Allen's bog itself. Some strange preservative arises from the black peat water and hardens them to the consistency of bog oak. But a wind from the west brings the salt Atlantic with it and warps them and dwarfs them and brings them to the state of some mossy ancient hawthorn bush. One day

it has been there for centuries, and another day it is gone, vanishing in that strange way that ancient beauty and ancient wisdom have of vanishing. Where is the white knight? Where is the black knight? What of the end of great Thane O'Neill, who fought Queen Elizabeth and won, fought her who had vanquished Philip's Armada? His last lineal descendant died, a coffin maker of Cork. Where is Maguire of Fermanagh? Old Sir Brian died of pride and cold and starvation. Everywhere old kings vanish into a dim aromatic past.

But the greatest of all the Irish names remained—O'Melaghlin, Mellon now—the last legal high kings of Ireland, sons of that Malachi who repulsed the red Danes, and wore, Thomas Moore writes of him:

. . . the collar of gold
That he won from the proud invader.

Beside Malachi, Brian Boru was an upstart Irish Napoleon, and Rory O'Connor, the last king, was a guerilla chief. The blood of Rory of the Hills was in Mellon's veins too, though on the feminine or distaff side, to be technical.

How does it come that these old families fade, become impoverished, die? Because a title will descend naturally to the eldest child, and the property may be divided among other children or willed to outsiders, and so in a few generations the baronet or earl becomes impoverished and drops his distinction for sheer shame. Also in Ireland estates and titles have been forfeited for disloyalty, and in Ireland too within the

half century has been the Encumbered Estates Act, which wiped out great properties as by magic, so that a princess of Connaught died ignobly in a cheap pension in Bruges. I know an old baronet in a poor-house—poor Sir Felim, they are kind to you, they say—I know of an Irish duke who has been prosecuted in a law court for swindling. Eh, worse than this, in a forgotten graveyard near my mother's fields, in a grave that is untended, unmarked, lies Edward de Bruce, Robert Bruce's brother, for two years King of Ireland, anointed, crowned, and begirt with sword. Only the Ulster winds do him reverence; only the Ulster mountains stand as sentinels.

So you can understand O'Connor Mellon, last of Malachi's high line, and in whose veins ran the blood of Rory of the Hills, dressing himself in ceremonial black to keep a little dignity, and betting cautiously, professionally, on the race course to get a little money.

He passed unnoted through some small school, and passed unnoted through Trinity—who will note even an heir of kings in a university which claims Swift and Congreve, Burke and Oliver Goldsmith, and lions of newer fame? And, coming out, some political friend obtained for him the post of coroner in one of the districts of Dublin. What the duties were I cannot say. I suppose they can be deputed to an underling, who would fulfill them with the necessary funereal expression.

For how many years O'Connor Mellon held the post of coroner in south, east, or west Dublin it would be

hard to say—these soft gray lives flow up so quietly. But suddenly, dramatically, he went “druid.”

Now to go “druid” is a phenomenon I have never seen outside of southern Ireland. A druid we conceive to be one of those ancient pagan Irish who sat on a hillside fondling a beard, looked into the misty future and did nothing. He never worked, and no one expected him to work. He was a druid, that was all. The phenomenon of a man going druid in Dublin is received with as much respect as of a man getting religion in more, or less, civilized countries. A man suddenly decides to work no more. On a certain hour of a certain day in a certain year he quits work. Thence onward he is a “druid,” receives the honors due a druid, and is just as prosperous, or more prosperous than before.

When you suddenly see a respectable coroner in sober clothes resign his position, and in the same sober clothes take to backing horses for a living, your Anglo-Saxon mind would call him mad. We more subtle Celts will say he has resigned himself to Destiny and the laws of chance.

Consider the blood that ran in this man, the blood of Malachi, the High King, and the blood of Rory of the Hills. The Irish King, for all that historians say to dignify him, seems to have been an easy-going sporting sort of ruler. You can see him in his saffron-colored kilts, with his great saffron-colored dogs, his horses small and fast and cunning as the polo pony of to-day. His wars seem to have been tempera-

mental outbursts to clear the air, and give the poets something to write about. When Thomas Moore writes of Malachi's "collar of gold that he won from the proud invader," he doesn't say how it was won. It might have been won over a football match, a coursing trial between dogs, or in a horse race. I should prefer it that way rather than to think he might have taken it on the field of battle. An Irish king should have been a gentleman above looting.

Not for nothing has racing been called the sport of kings. Where is such majesty? Where such fleetness? Where such uncertainty? The thrill as the starter pulls the lever and the tapes fly up, and "They're off!" rings from a thousand throats. "The favorite's walked it!" they shout at the fourth furlong, and "Bonnie Belle's going up!" as they turn into the flat. "Irish Arrogance wins!" some one calls as the big brown gelding hops the rails. But something flies out like an arrow: "Southern Queen! Southern Queen! Southern Queen wins!" Ah, the minute, the bonny minute, with the blood in one's veins humming like wireless.

How could the strain of Malachi, the High King, and of Rory of the Hills keep from the excitement of this speed and glory?

A gentleman with whiskers once told us that backing horses was wrong because it had no place in economics, and my Uncle Ardle replied, in that great booming voice of his, that he might deal in economics but that we dealt in Destiny.

If you are a certain type of Irish, as O'Connor

Mellon was, there is a deep bond between you and the horse. You can tell what a horse is going to do. If for centuries before your forefathers have considered walking to be a crude peasant form of locomotion, there is born in you an extra sense, the sense of the mount. Also there is a tremendous science to racing. You must know the pedigree of the horse, its sire and dam. You must know the likes and dislikes of horses. Some like certain tracks, some do well on others. Some are wonders on a muddy track, some like it hard and fast. It is not enough to see a certain horse entered, you must know his condition. Is he tuned up to win?

You must know your owner too. Some are rich men and are always out to win. And some are not above losing a race they should win. A bucket of water before a race will slow up the fastest thoroughbred.

You have got to know your jockeys too. Some are twisters. Of those who are honest, some are good, some are not good. If you have keen eyes and good glasses, you can detect a lot in a race. If you see a jockey riding with a loose rein, he is not going to win. If you see a jockey shifting his seat in the saddle, he is not going to win. There is rarely anything done so inartistic as pulling a horse's back teeth out. But these things you must watch, and you must hedge like lightning if you can, when you are a professional backer.

All these details being attended to, all this forethought given, enters Chance, with her upright head, her blind eyes, her nervous, uncertain fingers. But

in spite of Chance, and by dint of forethought, and by sheer knowledge of the game, O'Connor Mellon made two thousand English pounds a year. "And more power to him! Where are your economics now?"

He lived modestly, but he lived well. Near Rathfarnham, in Dublin, he had a comfortable whitewashed and well-thatched cottage that looked toward Three-Rock Mountain. An old housekeeper took care of him. There was a small flagged garden with forget-me-nots springing between the stones: around him the glory of the circle of mountains—in winter their white caps of snow or mist; in summer their brown heads and tinkling heather; the Dodder, at the foot of his garden, rambling carelessly toward Donnybrook and the Irish Sea, a happy, singing river, hurdling grassing weirs. He would sit outside in the garden on summer evenings, when the crickets put out their sweet loud chirruping, and the bats winged round to and fro from the ivy of the cottage walls. And in winter he would sit within before a fire of coal while the winds of Three-Rock Mountain roared over the chimney, and compound himself a punch from ancient potent Irish whisky, and drink it in a tumbler of cut glass, and read old dignified books, like the novels of Dickens and Lever and Thackeray, and books that dwelt with ancient Gaelic civilization, which is a hazy subject, some foul fellows of authority denying there was any at all. This home life was very comfortable, but for one thing—he had never been married. Every natural man marries, and afterward either likes or doesn't like his wife, but that doesn't matter. Those

who don't marry fail because of timidity or vanity. O'Connor Mellon was of the timid kind.

The women he knew, the women he had seen and become acquainted with at race courses, were of two types. One was the keen, hard, ascendancy type of sportswoman. Their faces were bronzed from hunting, their looks keen from concentration. They were as good judges of a horse as a man. They bet shrewdly, drank hard-headedly, knew what they wanted and got it. From them O'Connor Mellon shrank. He was afraid of a woman like that about the house. She would hustle him. Also these women had money, and would hardly marry the hereditary Irish High King, such shrewd heads did they have. The other type he shrank from in aversion, the female of the Dublin jackeens. Of course he might have married an Irish colleen, but to get one of those he would have had to go to New York or Chicago and raid a musical comedy, Irish colleens not being, and never having been, indigenous to Ireland.

So his heart never fluttered, nor did his ideas take a concrete matrimonial direction, until he met Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy of New York.

He met her in the grand stand at the Curragh races, a pert, black-eyed woman of about forty, with a merry smile and a merry manner. She wore a Paris frock, and a black hat, black as her eyes, with cherries on it, dark red as her small mouth. Everything about her was shipshape and trim, from her well-cared-for teeth to her well-cared-for finger nails. A friend introduced him, asking him to mark some winners on her race

card, and he came only dubiously, shyly, and not at all pleased.

A smile and he was stunned; a word and his head was swimming; a hand on his sleeve and he was gone. The battle with the bookmakers was forgotten, while he explained weights and pace to her, colors, trainers, and owners, and while he went to place her bets, equaling fifty cents or a dollar, with Jack Talbot, or that Mossy Landers whose motto is "Courteous Cork!" Everything he was possessed of he gave her that afternoon—time, knowledge, hospitality—in a grave, unostentatious way. Put him in saffron kilt and claymore, great plaid and cap with eagle's feather, and you would have recognized the royal courtesy. But what could she or you or any one see of royalty in that hideously respectable frock coat, in that hideously respectable silk hat, in that abominably respectable umbrella?

When he got back to Rathfarnham that night her vision remained with him: the chic clothes, the merry smiling face, the trim figure, and that most suitable age for him, a forty that an enthusiast might take for thirty-two. He sang to himself in a throaty, uncertain tenor that most Irish and most insincere of Moore's melodies: "Believe me, if all those endearing young charms." He looked at himself rather critically in the glass, head up, jerking the red beard to one side, and moving his aged housekeeper to wonder.

You would have thought, with the pleasant house he had—so lucky and friendly it was that the bees would always stay with him, with the brown, reflective moun-

tains and the singing river, and the race meetings he went to—Leopardstown, Punchestown, Fairy House, Baldoyle, the Curragh and Phoenix Park, and the smaller ones where the great jobs were brought off, Mullingar, Limerick Junction, Tramore, Dundalk—that he would have been happy here, happy as an otter in the river, as a bird in a high oak tree. But he had hidden in that sandy-red face of his a big ambition. Once to every business man, to every general officer, to every racing specialist, comes an opportunity that, taken, swings him onward to the heights. A horse rolls home at a hundred to one, and this is not always chance, but shrewd racing. Preparation for years, and secrecy. Sometimes you can even get better odds, if the bookmaker is caught napping. And O'Connor Mellon often dreamed of the time when he would get wind of a job of this sort, come in on it for a good round sum, and be settled for life.

Between himself and the Irish bookies there was enmity. The bookies don't like punters of O'Connor Mellon's type. They know as much as the bookies do, and more. To pay O'Connor Mellon, a certain fixed sum every year, and to pay it as certainly as to pay taxes, was no pleasure at all. Of the Irish bookmakers, the biggest was Patsy Regan, and between him and O'Connor Mellon was bitterness born of weird psychological twists. Regan originated in the slums of Dublin, which are the worst slums in the world, from the poor of Dublin, who are the poorest in the universe. There is a story he tells of fighting with the swans in Stephen's Green for the crusts of

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bread the by-passers tossed them, and that at the age of ten, which is the most terrible story I have ever heard or read. He is many times a millionaire in English pounds now, but those early days have put a rage, a terrible cold rage, in his soul. There he is, guttersnipe of Dublin, rich as Cræsus. There is O'Connor Mellon, of the strain of high kings, poor in money as a church mouse. Somehow they hate each other, explain it how you will. Somehow, too, they admire each other.

Once O'Connor Mellon had taunted him about odds offered on a horse. Regan stepped up to him. "I'll bet all the money I own in the world," he said, "against all you own in the world, and that's more than five hundred to one, and put it on one cut of cards. Are you on?"

"I'm not."

"Are you afraid?"

"I'm not afraid. But it wouldn't be fair to you."

Regan looked at him. "I know you mean that," he decided. "Look, for God's sake, don't let's be friends."

And they weren't. But O'Connor Mellon knew that whenever he could find the perfect job, Regan was his man, if Regan knew nothing of it. There was no money in the world Regan liked so much as O'Connor Mellon's. When they bet they snarled at each other.

"What's your limit?" O'Connor Mellon once asked him.

"I have no limit."

"What'll you give me on Fair Rosamond?"

"I'll give you two hundred to one, and you can have as much as you like. I'll give you a thousand to three."

And Regan risked ten thousand cheerfully to get Mellon's thirty pounds. Once he took five hundred from Mellon, who bet that amount to win fifty in a two-horse race, and he taunted the red man for months over it. There was no love lost between the pair.

If only Mellon could get on the perfect job, he promised himself he would take the shoes off Patsy Regan— And if he did!

There's where he pulled at his brier pipe and looked into the clouds of smoke, and the shrewd gray eyes grew dreamy. With his winnings he would buy three or four good horses—he knew where to put his hands on a good weight-for-age horse and on a jumper—and pick up a couple of bright yearlings that might develop into winners of stakes of great value. He might have a Derby or St. Leger or Lincoln winner among them. At any rate, with his knowledge of the horse, and his knowledge of racing, he was certain of making money. And then he would revive the title of baronet his grandfather dropped because of poverty—Sir Rory O'Connor Mellon he would be then, and an owner instead of merely a punter. He would have his horses at stables in England, and a few horses in Ireland. He had dreams, too, for rebuilding the battered old house in Meath, and tilling the few tired acres, and buying a field here and a field there, until he had a little estate, not much, but such as a country gentleman of the old school would have. And there were other plans he had. He wished to travel a little. And he flattered

himself he would give a dignified account of the last of the old Irish royal house.

All these things were possible, given the racing job, and the racing job would come, he knew, so long as he kept his ears cocked, his eyes open, his mind keen. But now there had come between his eyes and this concrete ambition the merry black-eyed smile, the trim figure, and the perfect suitable age of Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy.

On Fifth Avenue in New York she had one of those small shops where the smaller the shop the dearer the commodity. There was her Christian name above the door, just "Peggy," and in the window were a woman's frock here, and a woman's hat there, and somewhere a sheaf of wheat, or a bunch of posies, or some gadget of that kind. Though the hat and frock were perfect, and most extraordinarily expensive, for customers Peggy never lacked. I am told there are women who would prefer to go around in a state of nudity to going in frocks and hats which were not Peggy's. I trust my informant exaggerates. Peggy was one of those Irish geniuses which crop up in warfare, in poetry, in politics, in pugilism, in bartending, in millinery, in what not. She had come to America at the age of ten, and now at the age of forty, which an optimist might take for thirty-two, she was revisiting the land of her birth.

She had set out to make a conquest of O'Connor Mellon, because, first, he was so woman-shy, and, second, because he was a figure about Dublin, a queer romantic figure. There was something so grotesque

about him and yet so dignified. You might smile at O'Connor Mellon, but you would never laugh.

Before he had met Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy he had a penchant for the theatre, and when opera would come to Dublin, or the more worthy sort of play, O'Connor Mellon would dress and go there, sitting very rigidly in the orchestra. The show over, he would drive slowly back to Rathfarnham in a four-wheeler. Music halls he eschewed and musical comedy.

But, now Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy was here, he went everywhere she cared to go—to music halls and God knows what. He would call for her with a cab and a bouquet, and with the most charming of old courtesy treat her for the evening. As in this way: he loved his cigarette and a very small whisky and soda in the intermissions, but leave her side he would not for the while she was with him, because when a lady is under your protection in a public place you do not desert her for an instant. Such was our fathers' courtesy.

He loved her breeziness, her wordliness, her outright American way. She had been to Paris, to the Riviera, to the United Hunts meetings in America. Beside her in knowledge and experience he was a child. She had a downright way of looking at things.

"Mr. O'Connor Mellon," she said, "I've been told you're the last of the old royal strain of Ireland."

"The very last," he told her.

"If Home Rule comes, will you be King of Ireland?"

"No," he smiled, "I shall still be only Rory O'Connor Mellon."

"Then," she asked, "what's the use of all this royal blood?"

And, damn it! if you look at it that way, what is?

She went up, with some of her friends, to have tea in that little cottage in Rathfarnham, and surely never in the annals of Irish royalty were so many pains taken, so little expense spared for the reception of a guest. Dublin had been ransacked for delicacies; friends' cellars for old wines. Strawberries had been wired across to Devonshire for, because she had said the first strawberries of the season were a great occasion to her. They were there for her, with cream of the Irish kine. And primroses such as bloom only on the slopes of Three-Rock for her!

All that dark, cool house, that mellow furniture, great fireplaces, and small shining windows, came to her heart and throat as lavender comes to the nostrils. The little garden outside, fresh with mountain rain and many flowers, and below it the tinkling Dodder. The broad, high purple of Three-Rock—over its knees swept the green plains that went onward to the Curragh of Kildare. Peace in the heather of it, peace on the heights of it, peace on its knees. The droning of the honey-laden bees, the flight of swallows, the throaty cooings of the thieving wood pigeon. The proud iris on the river bank, and gray Dublin dreaming by the silver sea. Something in it all touched her heart. Not without trouble, not without disappointment, not without battle, does one become "Peggy" in Fifth Avenue.

"I could be very happy here," she said, and she

winked a tear away, and then, like the brave, sensible little woman she was, she put sentiment aside. She had given it its deserved tribute. She got down quick to O'Connor Mellon's affairs. She had heard, she said, he was a baronet.

"Yes," he admitted without enthusiasm.

"You are Sir Rory O'Connor Mellon?"

"Well, yes."

"Why don't you call yourself that?"

He hummed and he hawed. What's the use of being a baronet if you haven't enough money to baronet on?

"I'm going to call you Sir Rory," Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy said, "and you're going to call me Mrs. Peggy."

"If you had a wife," she mused, "she would be Lady O'Connor Mellon, wouldn't she?"

"Yes, yes. Well, yes."

"A nice name," said Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy.

She told him about her own business in New York. But she was quite modest about it. She gave a good deal of the credit to an employee of hers—a Mr. Cecil, no second name, just Mr. Cecil. Mr. Cecil was a chic young man, an English younger son, it was whispered, and absolutely the hairy ape when it came to hat making. No other milliner approached him. And to see him you would never suspect this genius of his. You would just take him for one of those sleek young men in evidence at dinner dances. O'Connor Mellon wasn't very much interested in him.

When she and her friends were gone, he thought over two of her sayings: that she could be happy there,

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with the peace of Three-Rock coming down on her like a blessing, and that Lady O'Connor Mellon was a nice name. He looked at himself in the glass, critically, appraisingly. The old housekeeper had come in to clear away the tables.

"Honor Foley," he addressed her, "would you think me, now, too old a fellow to be marrying a woman?"

She looked at him an instant. She rested her hands on her gaunt hips.

"So that's what's wrong with you?" she said slowly, crushingly.

Not another word did she utter. She went straight out of the room.

A curious thing, but from the instant he had seen, had fallen in love with Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy, his luck left him. Not only that, but bad luck came and followed him, like a dog that attaches itself to you, and that you don't want, and can't get rid of. Where before he had been receiving tributary checks from the bookmakers each Tuesday morning, he was now sending them. The difference between receiving two hundred dollars a week and disbursing two hundred dollars is exactly four hundred dollars a week. He wasn't a foolish amateur, he didn't go after his losses, plunging to make up. He went ahead in a serene, regal way, as though nothing were happening. But by the middle of May he was gasping. And Patsy Regan was purring like a cat.

"By jabers, but we've got the ould one on the run now for good," all the bookmakers chuckled. He had no mercy on them, and they'd have no mercy on him.

He was passing down Dodder banks one sunlit May morning when he met the Whisperer Murphy sitting by one of the weirs. The Whisperer was an aged, white-haired man with a blood-shot eye, and a brown derby on the side of his head. He was a horse doctor of an irregular school, never having entered a veterinary college, but he had "the gift," as the Irish say, and many a veterinary surgeon sent for him when in a fix. He was of half gypsy blood and half mountainy Irish, and was always roaming. He was called the Whisperer because of the queer crooning way he talked to horses. A minute of his husky whispering, and a man eater would follow him out of the stable like a dog. The peasantry believed he had bargained his soul away to the devil for power over horses.

"Mr. Mellon," he called, "would you tell me something?"

O'Connor Mellon considered a moment. "I would," he said.

"Would you throw back your mind now and tell me?"

"I would," decided O'Connor Mellon.

"Did you ever hear of a Derby winner coming out of a fish dealer's shop?"

"I did not," said O'Connor Mellon.

"Would you think it possible, now?"

"I would not."

"Did you ever see lightning?"

"I did."

"I've seen a filly that's faster," said the Whisperer Murphy.

Little by little the story came out. Some English country gentleman had died, and the next of kin was a distant relative who kept a fishmonger's shop in Bristol. The deceased squire had left hardly anything when all was settled. But among the effects was a filly he had bought at Doncaster and made an engagement on behalf of for the Derby. The fishmonger had sold all the effects and kept the filly. He had a stable made for her back of the fishmonger's shop, and a pal of his, who kept a saloon and had been an old jockey in his time, was training her.

"There's few as knows about it, and them as knows is laughing, but she'll win the Derby. She'll walk it."

"I can't believe it," said O'Connor Mellon.

"Would you tell me something, Mr. Mellon?"

"I would."

"Am I, or am I not, the Whisperer Murphy?"

It should have been enough for St. Thomas. It was enough for O'Connor Mellon.

"Will I be putting a matter of twenty pounds on this race for you, Whisperer?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Mellon," he said. "I have little use for money. A pint of porter when I'm thirsty and a good haystack to sleep in when I'm tired. I'm a roaming man, and 'twould be in the way, so. 'Tis a weakness of mine to do a favor for a gentleman," the Whisperer went on. "I'm for blood in horses and gentry in people. The real old Irish gentry, and that's yourself, Mr. Mellon, and maybe four or five others. Begad, they're the kings of the world."

"The world," said O'Connor Mellon, "seems to be an ignorant place."

He trotted back to Rathfarnham, hardly able to contain himself. The job, the perfect job! He fumbled among papers, and at last found the runners and the betting at the London clubs. The Derby Stakes for three-year-olds, ten thousand seven hundred and forty-five pounds, one mile four furlongs. There was the favorite at fours, Pentagon. There were Fair Lassie, Straightaway, Stamford Pride, at tens. Came the notable outsiders at thirty-three to one, headed by Dick Donovan's beautiful bay gelding, Ulster Bachelor. A few at sixty to one, like Sir Mick Jameson's mare, Victory Boy. Where was this Blue Bell, anyway? Ah, others, a hundred to one: Rascality, Irish Piety, Blue Bell.

He looked her up in the entries—she wasn't in the form book. Mr. Arthur Balfour William's Blue Bell, by Roi Bleu out of Songstress, trained by B. Evans. He had never heard of the owner, never heard of the trainer. The sire and dam were well known to him, great blood there. But there were accidents of blood in horses as well as in the best families. No wonder the filly was a hundred to one. A fishmonger's entry for the Derby. Why, you could write your own ticket.

In himself, and even outside of himself, forces were pushing him: "Go ahead, you've got it, the perfect job." Destiny caught him by the shoulder and shook him. "Man, here it is at last."

O'Connor Mellon smiled. He was thinking of Patsy Regan.

Only a week ago, he had been told, Regan was showing some friends about his new palatial house. Pictures everywhere but for one blank space on the wall. "And what is it you are going to put up there, Mr. Regan, sir? Is it a portrait of Parnell himself?"

"That," Regan announced solemnly, "is where I am going to nail up Rory O'Connor Mellon's skin."

If he were to go up to Regan and, pointing to this unknown Derby runner, ask for a thousand to three against, and buy three hundred pounds' worth, Regan would give it to him. Regan had been rolling in luck of late. Two great Irish sweepstakes had brought him in, it was said, nearly half a million pounds. And on the great fight on St. Patrick's night he had won a fabulous sum.

Regan's luck was in, Mellon thought, and his was known to be out. Regan would think he was splurging on an outsider on a hunch, and be glad to get the three hundred pounds.

Yes, Regan would lay him half a million dollars.

Seeing now that the Derby was only two days away, if he were going to put on his money, it should be this afternoon, or at latest to-morrow morning, before any possible information could trickle into Regan's office. The Whisperer was usually drunk as a fish, but one could never be too careful. Three days from now, his old heart hoped, he would be in possession of a fortune. A little advertisement in the newspapers notifying the public of the assumption of his family honors, and he would be no longer Rory of the race track, but Sir Rory O'Connor Mellon, Baronet, and

between the title and the odor of antique nobility, and the fortune of Regan's ransom, there would be few would remember the old punter of Baldoyle, so short are people's memories when prosperity comes. The old place in Meath once more built, and the small racing stable of colts and fillies of class—ah, the bonny animals!—and that hunter of Dominick Hooley's he could buy for a song: properly trained, there were great stakes in the same horse. Didn't he know him from frog to forehand?

This afternoon he would draw three hundred pounds from the bank and go down and draw Regan in his native den. But he couldn't this afternoon. He had an appointment in town with Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy. Well, then, to-morrow morning.

At three o'clock he called for her to take her to the Hibernian, and he noticed, as she shook hands, a queer, warm, personal touch about her. She seemed to want to be closer to him. She was so handsome, such a fine woman, so splendidly correctly dressed, his heart throbbed a little with pride to see that all in the room were watching. The men with unconcealed admiration, the women with shrewd appreciation of her clothes. After tea they went into St. Stephen's Green, he more led by than going with her. They sat by the little lake. She seemed preoccupied. She had seemed preoccupied all afternoon. She drew figures in the gravel with the end of her sunshade.

"Sir Rory," she said suddenly, "are we good enough friends for me to say something disagreeable to you?"

"Why—why; yes, yes, Mrs. Peggy," he said.

"Are you sure, Sir Rory?" Her voice was very sincere.

"I'm very sure, Mrs. Peggy," he answered promptly.

"Sir Rory," she said, "I like you. I cannot tell you how much I like you. There is something in you that just—just gets me. You are such a fine man, so well bred, so chivalrous—"

"No, no, no!" he exclaimed embarrassedly.

"Yes, indeed, Sir Rory," she insisted. "I know men. But there is just the one thing," she added.

"And that?"

"This horrible gambling," she told him. He looked at her, not understanding.

"Sir Rory, it's a terrible, insidious vice."

He was inarticulate. To call betting on horses, in Ireland, a vice, is as strange as calling the golden Irish whisky, with its odor of heather and burnt turf, the drug alcohol.

"Please, Sir Rory, please. For a friend's sake, for my sake, couldn't you give it up? I lie awake nights thinking of it," she said.

He could find nothing to say.

"Couldn't you, Sir Rory? Won't you?"

She turned around to him, and his heart all but broke. There were tears in her eyes. There were tears on her face.

"Why, yes," he said, "of course I could; I will. Please, Mrs. Peggy, for God's sake, don't cry. I will."

He leaned over and patted her hand clumsily, pro-

duced a great red silk handkerchief which he thrust on her clumsily.

"Dear Mrs. Peggy, of course I will give it up."

"You make me so happy," she said. "I can't tell you how happy you would make me."

"It is the best thing I can do," said O'Connor Mellon.

"Couldn't you find a position somewhere, Sir Rory?"

Of course he could. What are fishery commissions, Local Government Boards, curatorships of zoölogical gardens, art galleries, museums for? Dublin Castle for? Libraries for? What are these for if not to give ruined gentlefolk like O'Connor Mellon, and my Uncle Valentine, and their like shelter from the harshness of this most ungentle world?

"Because, Sir Rory, you can't win," she went on. "Mr. Cecil used to gamble for high stakes at bridge—a dollar a hundred points, and Mr. Cecil is a man of the world, not like you, Sir Rory—you are a child at heart, you know. I pointed out to him he couldn't win. How much less a chance is there in horse racing, where everything is crooked!"

There was a lot he could have told her, that one could win money gambling, seeing he had supported himself that way for years; that races weren't crooked; all his arguments foundered at the sight of her liquid, imploring eyes.

"There's just a little bet on the Derby," he faltered.

"No, no, Sir Rory!"

"It's not exactly gambling."

"Be a man, Sir Rory; put it aside."

"But—"

She turned away with a little hopeless gesture. Once more came the honest, sincere tears.

"I won't bet," said O'Connor Mellon.

She turned to him radiant. "Then on Derby Day," she said, "just to keep your mind off it, we'll go for a day away. We'll drive through Phoenix Park, and see the red deer, and go to the Strawberry Beds, and see old Lucan. Will you, Sir Rory?"

"It is you who make me happy."

They were both happy that afternoon. They wandered about like children, she happy with the consciousness of a good deed done, he happy to be with her. She ventured to tell him how distinguished, how commanding he would look—"Don't think me impertinent, Sir Rory"—if he requisitioned a good tailor and a barber who understood. If he could only see Mr. Cecil, he was so smart. She liked smart men. Everybody should be smart. A man should make as much of himself as a woman does of herself. Why not?

When he was at home that evening in Rathfarnham the wood pigeons were cooing their soft contralto call, bees humming like minute organs, the Dodder tinkled its little music, and the wind of Three-Rock moved the leafy trees to a gentle murmur. Everything was singing in the purple summer evening. And the concert was suddenly broken into by the faulty tenor of Rory O'Connor Mellon singing with immense sincerity that most insincere of songs: "Believe me, if all—"

Only in Dublin city could this phenomenon be accomplished so rapidly, the emergence of the gayly clad prospective bridegroom from the drab chrysalis of the grub bachelor. I shall tell you a deep national secret. When you have made a lot of money in Dublin by backing an outsider, or by less spectacular means, you hurry to a tailor and instruct him to dress you as befits your station and antecedents; and when a little later, before the clothes are delivered, the favorite loses in that extraordinary way favorites have of losing when you tie your shirt to their tails, or of the reputable business everything is lost but honor, you find it better not to go back for the ordered clothes, or indeed to say anything, for we have discovered this in Ireland, that hard words break an enormous quantity of bones, and the bones of tailors are brittle and expensive.

They fitted O'Connor Mellon out on the spot with a gray morning coat and gray vest, and a pair of striped trousers such as are worn at better-class weddings. A barber had trimmed his hair, and brought the beard to a point at which an Elizabethan courtier would wear it. A gray soft felt hat gave him the appearance of an explorer. Gloves and spats, and that Malacca stick with a gold top, such as papa and mamma present you with, suitably inscribed, when you dash heroically into three feet of water and rescue young Horatio from the briny deep.

All the grotesqueness was gone from him, all the eccentric quality of Dublin. He had always been a gentleman, but you had to look in his eyes to see that;

now you recognized it at fifty yards. The well-groomed gray figure, the pathetic noble face. Gone was Rory of the race track—you saw Sir Rory O'Connor Mellon, Baronet, of Ballymellon, in the County of Meath.

He was happy going to meet her in the motor car he had hired for the day. Occasionally a twinge came to him, as he thought of Epsom Downs and the horses being saddled for the greatest racing event of the year. The tipsters selling tips and the gypsies selling racing cards, and the men who insult your intelligence by telling you you cannot pick the lady out of three cards, when right there in front of your eyes you can see where she is—and bookmakers bawling the odds. "What is it—the Fishdealer's 'orse? An 'undred to one! 'Ere, write your own ticket!"

Well, O'Connor Mellon thought, there was an imperfection about the perfect job. Sometimes it didn't come off. Whatever Regan would pay him would not be worth his Peggy as a wife.

He thought: Well, we'll make the house a little bigger, and Sir Horace Plunkett and "T. P." and the boys would fix up a little place for him—they wouldn't see old O'Connor Mellon on the rocks. A nice respectable post in the Castle, maybe, or in the Local Government Board, or on some of the commissions. He'd like something to do with horses—wasn't there a Commission of Inquiry into the Possibility of Bettering the Army Horse? And the dignity and decent salary of that, and beloved Rathfarnham, and Mrs. Peggy—she would be Lady Peggy to the countryside. Damned

if he wouldn't recover the baronetcy, money or no money!

And Regan could go to the devil, he and his hundred thousand pounds! What did you care for a hundred thousand pounds when you had discovered the Jewel of Ivory?

She was dressed, when he called for her, in a costume of white flannel, and a red blouse with queer Russian embroidery on it, and her white hat had red in it cunningly. The dark, merry, Irish eyes, the black Irish hair: you would have taken fifteen years off her age but for the pleasant substantiality of her figure. They rolled through the park, green with June. His own clothes brought forth delighted phrases from her.

"Never, never let me see you in that dreadful frock coat and dreadful silk hat again. Oh, I wish Mr. Cecil could see you!" she said.

They had lunch at a little hotel in Lucan, where they were received with that masonic understanding smile that a couple who are obviously courting seem to evoke everywhere. The waiter was so overcome with emotion that he had to have two stiff taggeens of whisky before he could bring himself to the sordid business of serving the salmon. By now they were walking the sleek three-year-olds in the paddock at Epsom. Fortunes were being laid and taken, but O'Connor Mellon had thought only for Mrs. Peggy's eyes. He might have been eating a crust in a pub

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instead of a decent lunch in the Spa at Lucan, so little attention did he pay to it, such were her eyes.

When they wandered out to the river after lunch, his throat was dry, his heart was beating as it had never beat before. There was a funny little darting pain in his breast. The river was old and gentle, and went onward over its grassy weirs—it has seen so many loves, has Anna Liffey! The great hawthorn bushes rustled with the little wind, and showers of small white petals fluttered to the long green grass. All the soft somnolence of an Irish afternoon. A kingfisher skimmed the river lazily, and lazily droned the bees. And lazily a trout leaped for a fluttering fly, and lazily a stoat watched it, and didn't bother to go after it—there were so many trout. Peace and somnolence, a flowing river and green grass, and the benevolent sun of an Irish afternoon.

Afar off on Epsom Downs was mad excitement, as the horses turned Tattenham corner for the flash home, while roars came from the throats of the kings, peers, and commons of England, and the brown mass swept forward, jockeys with silken jackets, horses with silken coats. Eh, so far away, of so little consequence in the golden Irish afternoon.

There fell between O'Connor Mellon and Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy one of those distressing silences that occur before important things are said. She was troubled, watching the river. He was troubled, finding words.

"Mrs. Peggy," he said, "you mentioned you liked the place at Rathfarnham."

"Yes, Sir Rory." Her brows were frowning; she was troubled.

"And you liked the name, Lady O'Connor Mellon."

"Please, Sir Rory, please." She was distressed. She was red in the face. Ashamed.

"Mrs. Peggy," he went on, "would you do my poor house, and my poor honors, and my poor self the compliment of taking us?"

The gray hat was in his hand. The gray eyes looked at her sincerely. An air of simple majesty was about him. He stood there, a very upright, a very noble Irish gentleman.

"Sir Rory," she said, "I should have told you before. I have often said to myself I should have told you before, but I am—I am married now." She was very ashamed, very perturbed. "I had no right to keep it a secret like that."

If you were watching him very closely, which she was not, you would have noticed how stricken he was, how white his face became. The eyelids blinked rapidly for an instant. "Dear madam," he said softly, "anything you wished to keep secret, surely you had a right to do it."

"It was this way, Sir Rory—Mr. Cecil and I, on account of the business, and also," she said coyly, "because we were attracted toward each other, got married. And you know, Sir Rory, when a man like Mr. Cecil is known to be married, he loses his influence with the female clientele, so we keep it a secret."

"I'm afraid I know very little about business," said O'Connor Mellon deprecatingly. "But I wish you and Mr. Cecil immense happiness," he said, "and much prosperity."

"It is so good of you to take it that way, Sir Rory"—she was grateful—"and I shall never, never forget the honor you have done me."

"Not much honor, dear madam. The house is so small a one, and the title so common, and as for myself—"

"As for yourself, Sir Rory," said Mrs. Peggy O'Shaughnessy sincerely, "I shall always remember you as the finest man—outside Mr. Cecil, of course—that I have ever known. You are going to be a great man some of these days, Sir Rory, and when you are I am going to take a little credit to myself for it," she smiled, "because it will have been I who stopped you in this madness of gambling—which was ruining your character," she uttered softly; and then shrewdly: "and impoverishing you."

He saw her home to Drumcondra and bade her farewell, and was proceeding to Rathfarnham himself, very stricken and a little dazed, when he felt he would rather be walking than riding in hypocritical state in the great solemn car. So getting out, and paying the man, he went ahead down Sackville Street, past O'Connell's gaudy monument. A newsboy came dashing along as he put foot on the gray bridge that spans the Liffey.

"Th' outsider wins! Th' outsider wins," the boy was shouting.

O'Connor Mellon fumbled with a penny, and took the racing special from the boy. "Hundred-to-one Shot Takes Derby Stakes!" The headlines punched him right in the heart. "Fishmonger's Filly Canters the Course."

He went and rested his elbows on the gray granite of the bridge. Citizens passed him to and fro. Beneath the bridge the seagulls hovered, and gray Anna Liffey rolled onward to the sea, and Guinness's little barges puffed along merrily, laden with their cargoes of brown foaming porter.

A furtive breeze sent the racing paper down toward the Custom House. His hands grew lax, and the yellow gloves he was holding in them dropped into the river, to be investigated by the querulous gulls. The stick followed, tip foremost, with a plud. A second breeze whipped down Bachelors' Walk, and sent the gray hat skimming down the gray waters. O'Connor Mellon never noticed. Oh, it was too much! Too much!

Two jackeens of the race track passed. One wore cap and collar, the other hat and muffler. Hat-and-Muffler nudged his fellow sportsman.

"Je see that?" he asked.

"Did I see what?"

"Ould O'Connor Mellon and him dhrunk as a jook?"

"Je tell me so? I t'ought that one never took a dhrop."

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"Didn't I see him wid me own two eyes, and the tears running into his ould red whiskers?"

"I heerd tell, I heerd tell somewhere," said Cap-and-Collar, "that that one was a rale ould Irish king."

"Irish king, me elbow!" said Hat-and-Muffler.
"Rale ould Irish dhrunk!"

THE HORSE OF HURRICANE REEF

BY

CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

WHEN "The Horse of Hurricane Reef" was placed among the O. Henry Prize Stories for 1922, Blanche Colton Williams, chairman of the award committee reported: "Great art lies in the spirit of the telling, because it is so unconsciously harmonized with the theme. Imagination, in a too-often forgotten sense of the word, is the force which directs the progress and puts the story, in this respect, at the head of all the tales included."

THE HORSE OF HURRICANE REEF¹

"THE mares are for whoever is man enough to take them," retorted Jean Abadie from the bow of the barge which the towing launch was shoving into the mud shoal on the bay side of Île Dautrive. "Rojas has given them up. The white stallion killed his son, Emile, four years ago. No man of the camps around here will land on this reef; he has a name, that wild white devil!"

"You see, M'sieu Lalande, it is not stealing," added Pierre as he stopped the motor and looked at the stranger in the stern seat.

"It is stealing," grunted Joe Lalande, "else why do we come under cover of a storm to rope the colts and mares? Well, no matter. Once we get them aboard and up to the Mississippi plantations, I will show you something, you shrimp-seine Cajans. Throwing a rope, eh? Over westward they never yet showed me a horse I could not break."

The two seine-haulers from Sanchez's platform looked at him doubtfully. "Over westward," to the men of Barataria Bay, began at the dim marsh shore and stretched to infinity. A native never ventured so far; out there anything might be possible. But no man had faced the exiled king of Dautrive reef.

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Pierre muttered again how they would get the young mares—they would first shoot the white stallion. It was the hurricane month; they knew well enough that an obliterating sea would come this week over the dunes and marshes. Old Rojas, living with his grandchildren, orphaned by the white brute's savagery, on the far west point of the island, would never know what happened to the five mares and colts. More than once the gale off the Gulf had left the shell-beached *chenaies* far up the bay strewn with the dead cattle of the people of the reefs.

The big Lalande laughed as he followed through the salt grass to the first low dunes. "Shoot him! You'll shoot no horse with me! You say he's so bad; show him to me! I'll rope and load him, too, my friends, or he will finish me. If we lift Rojas's animals we take 'em all."

The Cajans laughed in nervous disbelief. Lalande, a native also, who had returned this season to haul seine in Sanchez's company, might have been a great man with the pitching broncos he told of, but Rojas's great white stallion—well, this boaster would see! The brute would allow no seine-crew to land on the Île Dautrive; they told of his charging upon the fishing-skiffs clear out to the surf line. Sanchez, the boss, had shot him once as he fled to his lugger, leaving the bleeding stallion to rend and trample an abandoned seine.

Grandpère Rojas, in his camp across the shoal depression that cut through the reef, had never tried to reclaim the wild mares and the colts of the white stud's

breed. The generations of them lived on the coarse reef grass and the rain pools; an oysterman had no use for horses, anyhow. His son, Emile, had tried this foolish experiment of raising horses on the reef, and given his life under the stallion's hoofs. *Grandpère* had shrugged and let the breed go wild; yet, as Lalande muttered when Jean and Pierre proposed to use his skill in lifting the younger animals, the horses were his to the scrawniest colt. But Lalande had come. He would show the shrimpers; and even if they only roped and dragged the least unruly to the barge, Lalande could break them and Pierre sell them on the plantations. Yet it was horse stealing. Lalande would not gloss that over, but something else had drawn him here—the stories the islanders told of the white stallion's savagery.

"Old Rojas's son, I will be the avenger," he grunted, sullenly, and came on the day Pierre had chosen for the secret raid.

Abadie had stopped on the sandy trail broken through the mangroves to the top of the sand ridge. "Bon Dieu!" he whispered, pointing. "His track, Lalande! Big as a bucket! *Eh Bien!* I'd rather face a hurricane than this white tiger!"

Lalande had stepped out in the open sand patch. From here the dunes fell away to the Gulf beach. Already the sea was rising. Between Dautrive and the outer bar curious, oily currents were twisting in unwonted directions, and beyond them the surf broke in white, serried teeth gleaming against the black southeast. The sky was ribboned in black lines streaming

northerly; the wind came in fitful smashes against the mangrove thickets and then seemed sucked up to howl in the writhing clouds.

"There'll have to be quick work," muttered Pierre. "I tell you this is bad, this sea. We waited too long, M'sieu Lalande. We better be back across the bay, and try for the colts another time."

Lalande's gray eyes narrowed surlily. He straightened his powerful figure above the wind-slanting bushes. The two other raiders had crept back through the brush. It was disconcerting to find the animals crossing their trail behind. "If he smells a man he will never let up on us, Lalande," muttered Jean. "Kill him, then!"

The white leader had crossed the trail of the raiders. He turned, broke through the brush, and gained the ridge forty yards from them. Lalande could see him now against the black skyline very plainly. A tremendous brute towering above the others, his shaggy mane flowing backward in the wind, his muzzle outstretched, his neck tensed until the powerful muscles bulged the satin skin. He was suspicious; he stood there a challenging figure to the storm, but his eyes were roving watchfully into the thickets as a tiger scenting prey.

Lalande glanced back. His comrades had slunk below the mangroves. They were brave, hardy men of the hurricane coast, but the evil name of the sea horse of Île Dautrive seemed to hold them nerveless. The horse was coming on along the top of the ridge slowly crashing through the brush with alert glances

right and left. His pink nostrils quivered, his iron-gray tail raised and swept in the wind puffs.

"They will shoot," muttered Lalande. "If he trails them the cowards will shoot." And he stepped more in the open, and then shouted, "come, thieves, let the colts go! I will need you on the throw-line to check and choke this brute!" Breast-high in the windswept thickets he was laughing and coiling his rope. This was a foe for a strong man who boasted!

The great horse suddenly upreared with a neigh that was like the roar of a lion. No man had so much as ever put finger on him; he had beaten the brains from one, broken the leg of another; and smashed two seine skiffs in the shallows for invaders. He had been the lord of the reef. Now he reared again and again as he plunged through the mangroves watching for the fugitives as a cat would a mouse under a flimsy cover of straw.

His satiny flanks were toward Lalande; apparently he had not yet discovered the man behind him in this hunt for the others. And then, out of pure panic as the white stallion broke near him, Jean Abadie fired. Lalande cursed and sprang down the slope of dunes after them. He knew he would need their help when he roped this horse; it was no starveling cayuse of the Texas range. But he saw now that the two islanders were skulking for the boat in the last fringe of the mangroves. They would never make it; out in the open the white stallion would crush them both ere they covered half the marsh grass, unless, indeed, they killed him.

The brute saw them now; he swerved in a tremendous rush below the man on the higher sand. Lalande was whirling his rope, and when he heard the hiss of it through the air he laughed, for he knew the throw was true.

"*Eh, bien*, devil! You and me!" He went down sprawling, seeking a root of the tough mangroves to snub the line. He caught one, then it was jerked out; and he went trundling and rolling over and over through the sands hanging to the lariat. He might as well have roped a torpedo. The horse was in the open now rearing and bucking, but with his savage eyes still on the fugitives. They were floundering through the water. Jean was jerking the mooring-lines from the barge, and Pierre poling the launch back from the swamp grass. The stallion was surging on with the line cutting deep in his neck, but they could not see this in the welter of spray he threw in his charge.

Joe Lalande was on his back in the high grass, bruised and dizzy from his ride on the throw-rope. It was lying out taut through the grass; and for a time the man did not stir. The stallion was plunging somewhere out there, still implacable with fury to get at the shrimpers. Then Lalande heard the first throb of the motor. They were getting away, leaving him, then? They must think him killed—a good end for a braggart who would rather fight the stud than steal the mares!

He lay in the grass listening, without even resentment. The wide reach of the bay northward was flecked with white surges rising between those curious

oily bulges of water, the first stir of the creeping tides which come upon the Gulf shores before the hurricane winds. Lalande remembered enough of his boyhood among the island folk to know that. Pierre was right; they had waited too long for this week of storm to raid Rojas's wild horses.

He crept around on the jerking line. Above the grass billows he saw the brute. He was whirling madly in the shallows fighting this strange, choking clutch on his neck. Then he charged back up the dunes, and Lalande barely had time to lie out on the end ere he was dragged again. But when the stallion plunged into the thickets, no human strength could hold. He felt his fingers breaking in the tangle of rope and roots, his face ground into the sand and pounded by showers of sand from the brute's hoofs.

Lalande staggered to his feet presently, cleared his eyes, and followed a crashing trail over the sand ridge. Northward he saw the launch rocking its way across the pass with whiplike streamers of wind hitting the water beyond. Everywhere the coast folk would be debating whether to quit their platform camps and take to the luggers or trust to the oaks of the *chenaies* and their moorings. The hurricane month, and a sea coming up past Cuba! Île Derniere had vanished under the waves; La Caminada gone with six hundred souls; these were traditions of the coast, but the natives knew what a hurricane tide meant on the low, loose sand islands that fringed the Louisiana swamps.

Lalande paused on the highest ridge. There was that sullen glisten of the sea, cut through with patches

of white, and the green-back horizon gaping to east and west and blotting out with gray squalls. The great wind had not come yet beyond these first squadrons. The big man shrugged as he regarded it. The hurricane tide was shoving frothy fingers out over the shoals. Across the sandy stretch westward he could just see the shack camp of *Grandpère* Rojas on the highest ridge of Dautrive. A few ragged oaks showed white against the sky. The old man ought to be leaving with his orphaned grandchildren, taking his stout oyster lugger and making for the solid land fourteen miles north across the bay.

"It is no place for little ones," muttered Lalande in the Cajan patois. These people never will leave quick enough before the storms. I can see the old man's lugger still riding behind the point. He is a fool, old Rojas, afraid to put foot on this end of the reef because of the white stud, but stubborn against the sea which comes like a million white horses."

He went warily on the crushed trail. That throw-rope would foul somewhere in the mangroves; that stallion would choke himself to a stupor, for not all the strength in the world can avail against lungs bursting for air. Then he saw the mares. They were huddled in a hollow of the dunes, the colts about them as if confused, uncertain, their shaggy coats ruffled in the wind. That wind was moaning now, high and far; not so bad here on the reef, but striking in slants on the sea as if the sky had opened to let an arrow loose. A hundred miles away as yet, that Gulf hurricane wind, but mounting; sixty, eighty, a hundred miles an

hour—a hundred and twenty-five in the bursts that presently drove the sand dunes into smoke.

The rim of wet sand beyond the dry, hummocky space was covered with sheets of black water racing from the surf line, breaking on the shoals.

And here Lalande saw what he had sought. There was the white mound in the ripples. With a cry he dashed for it. The horse was down. He had not thought it would come so soon. But the end of the trailing rope had fouled a great driftheap, and the brute had kept on charging and fighting until he choked and fell in the first wash of the sea. The slip-noose was bound to cut him down if he kept on hurling his weight against it, Lalande knew.

He wished he had seen the last magnificent fight against it on the sands; but now he walked quickly around the fallen brute, and knelt to touch his distended, quivering nostrils. The eyes were shut but bulging under a film. The great sides were heaving, a rumbling groan found escape somehow; it was as if the mighty heart was breaking with a last throb against this mysterious power choking its strength away.

“Eh, soldier!” whispered Lalande, and felt high on the horse’s neck.

A sudden apprehension took him. Perhaps the thong had killed the renegade? He did not mean that; he was filled with a great exultant joy in this savage. He had stalked and subdued him alone! He stood above this outstretched, trembling body in the first sea ripples, laughing.

“Come, boy! The fight’s not done yet! Not the

end yet." He twisted his fingers into the taut rope, forced on the dragging driftwood, and eased the tension bit by bit. The rope was buried in the white skin; he worked hurriedly, fearing it was too late.

"Come, come; this will not do—" he was whispering into the stallion's tense ear, fighting at the rope. Then came a fierce, convulsive blow, an explosive sigh, a struggle, and the stallion lay quiet again. He was breathing in great, resurging sighs. His filmed eyes opened slowly. Lalande kept on patting his muzzle while he hitched the noose into a knot that would not choke again. He did not know why he did this, only it seemed fair. He was looking close into the brute's eyes which were beginning to glow with sense again; and to withdraw the choking hitch seemed only justice.

Lalande stood up and looked down at the white stallion. The water was roaring out there now. The skyline was blown white as feathers. The mangroves were slanting; and he suddenly realized that the wind was hard as a plank against his cheek. Not bursting, but steadily lying against the land. There was no rain, yet the air was full of water streaming in white lines through a growing darkness.

"Get up!" he shouted. "The sea is coming. This is no place to be! Comrade, on your feet!"

And the great horse did so. First plunging up, but with his haunches squatted in the water as he looked slowly about. Then to all fours and standing with his tail whipped about on his heaving flanks. He seemed watching that wall of blow water from the Gulf. Watching steadily, undaunted. The sands under the

racing froth seemed trembling; one could hardly see the mangrove dunes not a hundred yards away.

Lalande swiftly turned his eyes from the ridge at a sound. It had seemed a shriek above the tumult. Then he leaped, and the wind appeared to lift him above the shaking earth.

For the great stud was on him. Upreared above him, a shaggy hoof coming not an inch's breadth from his skull.

Just a glimpse of those red, savage eyes; and the impact of those huge feet almost upon his own. Then Lalande ran. The hurricane wind flung him onward, but he could hear the rush of the white stallion. The entangled rope checked the charge only enough to allow the man to hurl himself into the first mangroves, crawl under them in a whirlwind of rising sands, and keep on crawling. When he stopped he knew the horse was crashing in the thickets hunting him. He saw him as a wraith against the sky, plunging his head low to ferret out his enemy, blowing explosively and hurling the tough mangrove clumps aside.

Lalande kept on his stealthy crawl. He lay, finally, in a water-riven dusk under the lee of the dunes, listening. "*Dieu!*" he panted. "I said, a soldier! The hurricane could not stop that hate of men!"

For half an hour he did not move. The brute had lost his trail. And when Lalande crawled to the top of the dunes he could not stand. All over the weather side the sea had risen. It was white. White, that was all he could say. And the wind? It did not seem a wind, merely a crushing of one's skull and lungs.

When he tried to turn away it threw him headlong, but he got to his feet on the northerly, lee side of the sand ridge and fought on.

The sand was dissolving under his feet, and now he saw the water of the bay streaming by him. The inner marshes were gone; the hurricane tide was on, and sixty miles inland it would rush to batter on the cypress forests and the back levees of the plantation lands. Lalande had no illusions about Île Dautrive—he had been a lad on this coast—but he kept on, for the highest ridge was at the western point. Across the sand shoal, beyond this point, was still higher land, a clay fragment in which grew a few stout oaks. By these Old Rojas's camp had stood. It did not stand there now, thought Lalande. Nothing built by man on the reef would stand. *Grandpère* and the children of the man whom the white stallion had killed must certainly have taken to the lugger—escaped before the hurricane tide rushed upon the flimsy shack. Surely, yes. Rojas was no fool!

Lalande kept on, clinging to the thickets when the worst clutch of the wind was on him. The roaring of it all was so steady that actually he seemed in a great silence, as if a new element had enveloped him—a normal thing, this shock and unceasing tenseness of feeling and of sound. Through it he strode steadily himself, a strong man with neither fear nor curiosity—a mere dull plunge on to the last foothold of that reef which was churning to gruel behind his steps. He could not miss the point; there was no other spot to reach, and the hurricane was guide as well as captor.

And his mind was upon the lord of Dautrive Island. "He will go. Perhaps he is gone now. And the mares and colts, all off the reef by now." And a grim satisfaction came that the white stud had turned on him at the last. It was fine to think of. The savage had not cringed. "I do not want anything that can be stolen," he murmured, and spat the sea spray from his sore lips. "His mares and colts, he fights for them—that devil!"

And he began shouting profane, fond challenges and adulations to his conqueror somewhere in this white chaos of a night. A whipping wisp of scud was that charging shape above the torn thickets; any single shriek of the storm, his trumpeted challenge in return. Lalande boasted to his soul that he was seeking his foe; if it was the last stroke of his hand he wished it raised to taunt the white, oncoming devil.

Even the storm glimmer had faded when he felt the water shoaling from his armpits to his waist. This was the west point, the highest, and here, with hands locked to the stoutest of the mangroves, he would have to let the sea boil over him as long as a strong man could—then go.

On the western high point at last, and nothing to see, nothing to feel but the submerged bushes and the earth dissolving so that he had to keep his feet moving to avoid each becoming the center of a whirlpool.

"It is a storm," Lalande grunted. "Two white devils on this reef." He remembered seeing spaces of mirrored calm, peaceful coves over which they told him orange trees had bloomed in cottage yards of the

reef dwellers. The sea had devoured the islands in a night, dug the hole, and lain down in it like a fed tiger. Lalande, crowded closer to the stouter thickets, put out his hand in the dark. He touched a wet, warm surface, heaving slightly.

The skin of a brute. He smoothed the hair in the rushing water, felt along. A wall of steely flesh broadside to the tidal wave. Lalande softly slipped his hand over the huge round flank. The water was swirling about them both to the man's armpits now. Lalande knew. They were on the highest point, but ahead lay the shoal pass. The sea was eating away this point; what was left was sinking, flicked off into the meeting currents around Dautrive and swept inland. The island would be silt on some cane planter's back fields forty miles up the Mississippi delta within the week.

But for the last of his domain the lord of Dautrive was fighting with his last foothold. The white devil of the sea was doing what man could not do. Lalande laughed in the blackness. The stallion could not feel his soft touch in all that beating welter of sand and debris churning around him. He rested his arm across the unseen back—the brute would think it was a driftwood branch. The man stepped forward. There was no other foothold now, it seemed. He reached his hand to the shoulder, up to feel the stiff, wet mane. He laughed and patted the bulged muscles.

"We go, you and I," he grumbled. The mangroves were slatted out on the tiderush, tearing loose, reeling past them. "Eh, friend? The last—"

And then he knew that the horse had whirled, up-reared in the blackness with a scream of fury. Lalande sprang to the left, into deep, moiling water.

He felt the plunge of his foe just missing him once more. But another body struck him and then was whirled off in the meeting tides. He collided with a colt in the dark; and now he guessed that the white stallion's breed had been gathered on the refuge shielded to the last by his huge bulk against the inexorable seas.

They were gone now. There was no more foothold on Dautrive either for the exiles or the man who had come to subdue them. Lalande knew he must not go with the tidal wave. It was death anywhere out there. The water would rush fifty miles inland over the battered reefs. So he fought powerfully back to get a handhold on the mangrove thickets through a whirlpool of dissolving sand.

But the man could not breast those surges through the dark; he felt himself driven farther back in a tangle of foam and debris, and suddenly came a whip-like tightening about his legs. He was dragged under and out across the current until he fought down to grasp this thing that had him.

It was his throw-rope, the new and heavy line that he had brought to conquer the white stud that the island men feared. Lalande plunged up and along it. The rope was tight and surging athwart the drift. When he got his head above water he knew he was clear of the disintegrating sand point, overwhelmed

by the rollers in the pass and stung by the spray, but moving.

An unseen guide, a mighty power was drawing aslant the inshore tide. Lalande hauled along until he felt the rhythmic beat of the stallion's stroke; along until he touched his flank. When he could put his hand to his long mane Lalande laughed. He hung there, and felt the brute plunge higher at this contact. Once, twice, and then the stud settled to his fight.

The lord of Dautrive could not shake him off nor rend him with teeth or hoof. He was being ridden through the blackness and the sea.

Lalande began shouting. He could not resist the impulse of defiance; the great horse had been merciless to him on the island, so now he howled at him whenever he could keep the salt water from his teeth.

"Eh, bien! Big fellow, you see I am here! If you go, I go! Lalande is with you—devil! Fight! Fight on; a man is on your back at last. A last ride, too, white devil!"

For he had no hope of anything except to be battered to a pulp by the driftlogs and wreckage in the pass or drowned over the flooded marshes. But the stallion would not give to the northward tide, always he kept fighting to windward and westerly. When he plunged on these tacks Lalande swung out straight over his back, but clinging lightly and calling his taunting courage to the brute.

"The west ridge," muttered the rider. "He knows that, the oaks and the clay soil. If anything hangs together in this sea it will be that." So he clung in

the dark. Nothing but the incessant battles of the horse's broadside in the hurricane tide kept that feeling in Lalande's heart that the swimmer was trying to cross the pass to Rojas's oak grove. The white devil was blind in the white sea, but he remembered that. Lalande could feel the leg strokes steady and true even when the waves lifted or buried them, or when they were half drowned in the whipped foam among patches of reef wreckage. The man was fighting at this debris to keep it from the stallion's neck when he felt something else streaming along his flanks. It appeared to be submerged bushes or thick, long grass twisting about beneath them. And there was a changed note to the hurricane's tumult.

Lalande swung up on the stallion's back, listening. The swells of the pass were slower here, huge and strangling, but not with the fierce rush they had battled. The horse was swimming more to seaward, almost head on now, and once he arose as if his forefeet had struck the earth.

"He has found the marsh," muttered Lalande. "Night of wonders; nothing else!"

Still that powerful, steady stroke under the man's clinging limbs. The brute was seeking whatever land might be above the water. Then Lalande began to think, as again he felt the forefeet touch bottom.

"Then we fight again, eh, tiger? Shake me off and come at me! Make the oaks and we'll see!"

The horse plunged past a torn oak stump which smashed him in the side. He was in water to his withers, but Lalande knew he was climbing. He got

a foothold, leaned against the tide rushing through the oak grove, and kept on. Against the man and horse there crushed another trunk, denuded of leaves, swinging by its roots, staggering them with its blows. The sea was over this also, Lalande knew. If it came higher there was no hope here.

Then the stallion stopped. He stood belly deep in the lee of another oak trunk which Lalande could feel in the utter dark. And the man sat silent astride the white king of Dautrive who had lost his domain and his subjects. He moved his legs across the heaving flanks—a sort of stealthy challenge. He wanted the white stud to know that he, Joe Lalande, was there astride him. He laughed and leaned to pat the unseen arch of the neck.

And then again came that furious, uprearing plunge of the great brute. His head came about in a side blow, his teeth tearing at Lalande's face as the rider swerved out under this twisting, maddened attack. He heard that trumpet cry again of the wild horse seeking him as he dragged himself about the oak tree in the water. He stood clutching the rope, trying to make out the brute's form.

Then he knew that the swells riding through the twisted oaks were slowed; the yelling of the winds more fitful, higher; and a sort of check came to the clutch on his body against the tree. Lalande seemed to stand in a frothy eddy as if the sea had stopped running and was foaming to an apex about him. And he knew what it meant, the moment that always comes in the Gulf hurricanes. The wind was dying off and

changing. The sea could do no more. It had piled its flood as far inland and as high as even its strength could hold. Its whirling center was now over the coast, the wind whipping fitfully, now southwest, westerly, northward, and beginning to rise again. But there came one moment when it was almost a calm, silence except for that roaring in the sky.

"*La revanche*," muttered the man. "Now comes the worst—the rush of the tide back to sea. The good God help them all, these Cajans who have not found refuge up the bay. *La revanche*—that is when they die!"

He felt about his oak trunk, wondering if it were still rooted firmly. The white stallion must be just about the torn branches, for Lalande still had the trailing line. And then came something that numbed him with uncanny fear. A voice out in the dark, a child's cry among the oaks.

"*La revanche! Grandpère*, it is coming! Get the lines the other way, *Grandpère*—"

Lalande went plunging toward the spot. "*Nom de Dieu!* It is not possible? Rojas!" He shouted, and stumbled among wreckage of trees and timbers around his waist. "Rojas, you are in the grove?"

A dim light glowed behind a blanket. He saw a boy had snatched this moment of the falling wind to try the lantern. When Lalande waded to the spot an old man straightened up on the other side of a sunken raft. Upon it, under the blankets, were lashed the forms of Rojas's children, the orphans of Emile, who had once sought to tame the white horse of Île Dau-

trive. Old Rojas held the lantern close to his white beard. He seemed as frightened as was the small boy by the stranger's coming.

Old Rojas had been trying to spike a cross-piece to his shattered raft. His lugger had been smashed in the first reach of the hurricane, and he had torn up the planks of his camp floor to build this refuge anchored to the biggest oaks of the grove. They knew what to do, these Cajans of the reefs, when they were caught by the hurricane tide. Cut the mast from the lugger and drift inland, seize an anchorage before the dreaded *revanche* took them seaward; or if not that, hang to one's oak stumps!

Lalande did not waste the precious moments with a single question.

"A brave fight, old man. I see you made a brave fight! Give me your raft-lines. The other way around now, and to the stoutest trees. This sea, it is like a mad tiger when it has to go back defeated! Come." He took the mooring-line and plunged off in the waist-deep froth.

"Day of wonders!" mumbled old Rojas. "A man on the reef—living! A big man, strong after the hurricane! It is impossible!" He went hammering his raft as it surged and plunged by his shoulders, ordering the youngster to make himself fast once more in the life ropes which held them all to the shaking planks. There was no whimper from the four children. They raised big dark eyes staring from *Grand-père* to the strange man who was battling back in the first seaward rush of the waters to make them fast

against *la revanche*. The wind was smiting again. It appeared to fall out of the blackness to the north, blast after blast, rising swifter, smiting the piled-up waters, hurling them over the reef islands with thrice the speed they had come in.

The dim lantern went out. The fugitives tied themselves on again. If the worn lines held and the raft kept together they might live. "Name of Names!" grumbled old Rojas. "A man coming to us out of the sea? He said he would make fast for us. If not, my children—well, we must trust him."

Lalande had struggled off into the new rush of the wind with the raft-lines. They were frayed and ragged. He made them fast to his own new throw-rope. He would get this rope off the stallion somehow, and make it fast to the big oak. If not—he shrugged, well, then, nothing! Every wreck of a lugger, plank of a camp, driftlog, tree, that was loose would be miles in the open Gulf to-morrow to eddy endlessly in *la revanche*.

The old man's mooring-lines would not reach the big oak. Lalande had thought that, combined, they might last the night out, but the sea and wind were whipping fast on him in the dark. He had to plunge out shoulder deep to the tree, feeling of his line.

"The white devil is there and quiet," he grumbled. "If he would let me slip the rope from his shoulders and tie to the tree!" He breasted the brimming tides over the submerged isle past the oak, his hand cautiously out to the dark. "Devil!" he called softly. "This is for Emile Rojas's young ones. The rope,

devil! We've fought, you and I, but now let me have it."

The line was tight past the oak stump. The weight of the raft was already coming strongly on it as the tide began to seethe through the shattered grove. Lalande could hardly keep his feet, or his eyes open against the bitter spray. Then he was off his feet; he was hanging to the line, fighting out on it, calling to his foe, reaching for him. The brute must be swimming now, for the footing had gone from under them both.

Lalande felt a plunging on the line. It was too late now to hope to get the rope to the oak. The fighting horse was on it, and it began to give slowly past the man's hands. *La revanche* was bearing them on, the raft, the man, and the white devil who was its sole anchor, now. Lalande clung with one arm to the oak and drew in on the line. The dead weight of the raft had its way. The bucking, plunging brute, now touching the ground, now surging in the tide, was being drawn to him. Lalande began to call again. He had a great sense of pity for the stud. There were things that could not be withstood even by his lion heart; yet even the sea might not conquer except for this choking drag of the raft that held Rojas's grandchildren.

Lalande touched the stallion's muzzle now, coming on fighting with the obstinate ferocity of a white shark. He crouched in the crotch of the oak and held out his arms to the stallion's neck. When finally the brute crashed upon the sunken oak, Lalande

reached his fingers to the cleft where the throw-rope cut into his neck. He dragged on the line, vainly trying to ease that tension. Once he thought of his knife; he might cut that choking grip from the white stud's throat. Then Lalande lay back in the crotch above the plunging hoofs and eased the great head above his own shoulder. Dragging on the line with all his power he kept up his whispering as the hurricane tide rushed under them, swinging the oak on its roots, twisting it seaward, and sucking the earth away in whirls where Rojas's house had stood.

"I tell you we are still here, you and I," called Lalande after a while. "You and I, devil! You and I—smashed up together, my face against your own! *Eh, bien!* Be quiet, Emile Rojas may be watching his children, and you in this storm? Remember that, white devil, you have returned for them!" He laughed and shouted in the dark, his arm about the neck of the horse working his fingers under the rope, trying to take some of the strain upon his own flesh and bone. And presently he grumbled, "And remember, also, I am not a thief. Not a thief, eh?"

They clung that way five hours, until the crest of *la revanche* was passed. The sun even got through the huge rifts of black clouds streaming south by the time old Rojas stirred about from his creaking raft in the scrub oaks. Everywhere a brown, dirty, sullen sea setting out, flecked with drift and wreckage, and of all Île Dautrive nothing showed but these few battered, branchless trees.

The stout old man waded waist-deep from his raft

where now Emile's young ones sat up stiff and drowsy from the sea's nightlong flailing. He followed his mooring-line out to where it sogged under water by the big oak. The eldest boy had stood up looking after him.

"*Grandpère!*" screamed the lad suddenly. "Look! The white horse has come! By the tree, with the man!"

Old Rojas waded and struggled there, too astounded to speak. The sight was a queer one, indeed. The white horse was drawn against the oak-crotch, pinned in there, in fact; and the rope from his neck also crushed the strange man against his shoulder. Joe Lalande appeared to be crucified against the satin coat of the stallion. But he lifted his free arm faintly when the old man floundered near them.

"M'sieu?" gasped Rojas. "You here?" He had to touch Lalande's drenched body ere he would believe that the man lived. Then he fell to loosening the slacked rope so that Lalande lurched down from the horse's neck into the water where he could hardly stand but clung to the tree trunk watching the animal. The rope had cut through Lalande's arm and shoulder until it made a long red-scarred mark from neck to elbow. He could not speak for a time from his salt-swollen lips.

"Yes, I am here," he whispered at last, and staggered weakly.

"Name of God, the white horse!" cried the old man. He put his hand out to touch the smooth side, but as if fearing him even now. Lalande was trying to

discover whether or not the heart of the white stallion still beat; and then he turned away, his eyes closing wearily. He seemed to be shaken by a sob, a grief that the islander could not comprehend.

"What's the matter, M'sieu? We are safe; the boats will find us. *Le bon Dieu!* that was a storm! I have never seen a greater on this reef!"

Then he looked curiously at the still form of his old enemy. "*Eh, bien!* It took a white sea to kill this white devil, my friend!"

"It was not the sea," grumbled Lalande. "The touch of a rope on his neck, M'sieu. I saw his heart break last night, but it was for the children of Emile. A rope and the touch of my hand upon his neck, they were not to be endured, M'sieu." Then Lalande turned away, as if speaking to the lord of Dautrive against the tree: "At least you must know this, white devil, the hand on you was not the hand of a thief."

OLD MISTIS
BY
BARRY BENEFIELD

STORIES like "Old Mistis," which made its début some years ago in *Scribner's Magazine*, have caused Edward J. O'Brien to write in consideration of Barry Benefield: "Mr. Benefield's peculiar distinction is to sublimate the finest essences of life out of the most dusty material, and so to glorify our clay."

OLD MISTIS ¹

THAT year I was clerk, bookkeeper, and assistant postmaster in Arkadelphia, which is Simon Stettler's general store, on the white sandy road, fifteen miles from Minden, in the cotton country of east Texas. It was a boll-weevil year, and by Christmas a constable was going about foreclosing the mortgages held by Mr. Stettler on land and live-stock, belonging chiefly to negroes, who in the South are often as much the slaves of impersonal legal documents and ruthless legal machinery as ever they were of white masters.

One day in January I heard the constable reporting to Mr. Stettler that he had been to Jeff Morrow's place to get his gray mare. The old negro had said she was out in the field, and promised to ride her over to the store for surrender the next day. "We'll see," said the merchant, turning to other business.

After dark the next day the aged little albino slipped through the door, as if he hoped he would not be seen. Mr. Stettler having gone away to Minden to attend court, I was alone in the management of the store; and as there were several people showing an active disposition to buy, I paid no direct attention to the new-comer except to speak.

¹ From "Short Turns," by Barry Benefield. Copyright, 1926, by The Century Company.

He walked to the lower end of the counter and stood leaning against it, alternately crushing and smoothing out his dingy brown felt hat, his pinky-white eyes watching me fearfully. Once or twice it happened that he was in my way; when he discovered it he leaped scufflingly aside, with an exclamation of piteous apology. After a while the lamp-lit store was clear of all but myself and the little negro, in whom freakish nature had wrought the curious variations from type characteristic of the albino. His wrinkled, milky-white cheeks were ghastly where the points peeped through his frizzly, pale-gold beard.

"Well, Jeff, what can I do for you?" I asked, having forgotten for the moment about his mortgage. Out of the frame made by his conjoined beard and hair his eyes were straining vainly to read some hope into my face.

He moved down the counter until he was opposite me. Leaning over it, and trying desperately to accomplish the negro's customary smile of placating amiability, he whispered, "I brung Ole Mistis oveh"; and then I remembered. I turned quickly to look at a row of tomato cans on the shelf behind me. He went on in his habitual hoarse half-whisper:

"Yassah, I told de constable I would. You know, I mortgaged her, de Lawd he'p me, an' you knows whut de boll-weevil done to we all in de summer jes' gone by. Season befo' dat I mortgaged my ten acres to Mister Jamison, in Minden, an' now I ain' nuffin but a renter on my own lan'. Dis pas' season I stakes Ole Mistis, 'cause she wuz de onliest thing 'at would stan'

even a little bittie mortgage—well, suh, ne'min' all dat; Mister Stettler 'vanced me sixty dollars in supplies, bad luck come, Ole Mistis tied outside to a pos'. She ain' mine now, is she?"

To evade his question, which I hadn't the heart to answer, I faced around and asked him one.

"Why did you give her that name?"

At this, through the bramble of pale-gold beard, the small face shone with swift radiance. "'Cause she bosses me so, an' meckin' no noise at all about hit. Jes' a word er a look f'om her, an', suh, I cain' no mo' he'p doin' whut she wants, no more'n I could fer ole Mistis Marlowe afore she died. An' so I named her when she wuz a colt."

"How many in your family?"

"On'y me an'—on'y me now. My ole 'oman, she dead an' buried long time ago; de chillern, all boys, done gone away de Lawd on'y knows whar; an' I spec He lose track on 'em now an' den. Yassuh, I'm de onliest one—now. I ain't never counted my coon houn' an' de chickens an' de hawgs in de fambly. But Ole Mistis, she wuz in it; lately she wuz mos' of it."

The light had died out of his face, and he was again crushing and straightening out his felt hat. I wanted to say something, to do something; there was nothing to say, nothing to do.

"Well, suh, I reckon I better be ramblin' on back home. Hit's a mile oveh in de piney woods. I'll be tellin' you good-evenin' now. Hit's right smart col' dis winter, ain't it? Good-evenin' to you, suh."

"Evening, Jeff."

Smiling in valiant amiability, he opened the door, slipped through, closed it behind him softly. I heard his steps leave the porch and sound gratingly once or twice on the gravelly ground in front of it. I worked on in the store an hour longer, posting the books and tying up some mail for the next day's rider; and when I had closed up, locking the rear door last, I walked around the long frame building to lead the old gray mare back to the stable. As I turned the corner I saw a figure separate itself from the horse and stumble off into the darkness. Ole Mistis whinnied in soft appeal.

Upon his return from Minden, after several days, I told Mr. Stettler in some detail how the gray mare had been surrendered.

"Yes," he answered. "We'll feed her up this month and next; somebody will be wanting to buy her when planting-time comes. She's eight years old now, but there's five or six years of good work in her yet. Old Jeff always treated her well."

It was easy for me to understand the merchant's hardness. Fifteen years before, I knew by report, he had come walking through the country with a small stock of dry-goods in an oil-skin pack on his back, which still showed in its stoop the trade-mark of his early days. Then he had been treated with scant respect by even the negroes. If this had affected him, I was sure he had not revealed it; and after five years, having built the store and started in business on a larger scale, he had transacted his affairs with the same imperturbable, fateful calmness as in the days of

the oil-skin pack. The machinery of business had pulled Ole Mistis away from her aged master and servitor; in the beginning Simon Stettler had let nothing interfere with that machinery, nor did it seem likely that he would now.

Once or twice a week after that, Jeff came to the store to buy a nickel's worth of sugar or a dime's worth of coffee. It was his custom to come early in the afternoon, and having made his purchase to slip around to the ample stable yard, where the gray mare with other mortgage prisoners strolled at their ease. I often watched him rubbing her nose through the fence and talking to her. I grew to be very much interested in this captive, whose coat was uniformly flecked with little black spots—dingy ermine robe of a fallen queen.

Before the end of February the sap was rising in the ground, and the peach-trees were in pale-pink blossom. The farmers were making leisurely preparations for another season's crops. Fences were being repaired, gardens planted, mortgages signed.

About this time Jeff told me in the store one day that Mr. Jamison, who now owned his ten acres of thin, gravelly land, had refused to let him have it another year unless he could get a horse from somebody else. The Minden merchant, he went on, was trying to rent the farm.

"An' I may be movin' in a week or so," he stated.

"Where to?" I asked.

"Maybe somebody'll hieh me to meck a crap on dee fahm," he said hopefully, and started slowly out. I

looked after the bent, fragile figure; it was not pleasant to think of his hopes.

Mr. Stettler did not think it was good business to let Jeff have a horse and supplies for another season. Then I heard that he had been dispossessed to make room for a tenant family that had rented his old farm and another adjoining it. He moved his hound and his chickens, his cooking utensils, and his planting tools to a ruined cabin in an unfenced fallow field, thickly dotted with stunted second growth pine saplings, the property of an estate tied up in a court fight.

Now things were beginning to advance rapidly in the country. The atmosphere of ease and leisure was changing to one of energy, even of excitement. Corn was in the ground. Everybody was asking everybody else how many acres they were holding for cotton, how many for the smaller diversified crops, what they proposed to do about the boll-weevil, whether this or that new kind of cotton-seed had proved successful, and whether there were any readable and reliable signs in moon and stars and almanacs indicating a good-crop season. Often, in the store, I saw the homeless, despairing little negro, standing humbly at the outermost edge of a group of eager, thrilling crop gamblers, listening, listening, listening, saying nothing.

On a day in April—I think it was April, for I remember the atmosphere in the country was at its tensest with large, new hopes—Mr. Stettler asked me not to make any dates for that night.

One half of the second floor of the store he had fitted up as his home, to which a negro woman came three

times a day to cook his meals and in which I lived with him. The gigantic dining-room was in the rear, its two windows looking out on a short stretch of open ground shaded with oak-trees, beyond which was the big stable-yard, with the barn in the middle of it. Several times as we ate supper I noticed Mr. Stettler turning his eyes to the windows; through them nothing was to be seen in the softly dark, vaporous spring night outside, so that I knew his eyes were unwittingly pointing the direction of his thoughts.

After supper he lit his pipe and sat down on a deep chair by one of the rear windows, but he did not put on his carpet slippers, so that I knew we were going out. When the cook had washed the dishes and gone away, he said, still staring out of the window and scratching thoughtfully at the patches of red-gray beard on his thin cheeks:

"Well, somebody is trying to steal our horses."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"I noticed this morning that the padlock on the stable door was all scarred up. Somebody had been trying to break the lock or to pull out the staple that holds it. He must have been interfered with; for if he had tried long enough he could have got in; I know I could. When I saw the lock this morning I remembered that I had heard the dog barking in the middle of the night. But he stopped all at once, as if he had recognized somebody; you know how a dog's fierceness collapses when an unfearing, familiar hand pats him on the head. And then I guess whoever it was decided to come again and silence the dog first."

"What are you going to do about it? That's why you wanted me to stay in to-night?"

"Yes," he said, standing up. "I have pulled the staple almost out of the door-post; it will be no trouble to get at the horses to-night. And I have tied up the dog. I judged, from the tracks in the dew-crusted sand around the door this morning, that there was but one man in the business. Whoever it is, if he comes, I want him to get into the stable and start out; then we'll grab him. You understand: I want to get this fellow *after* he has taken a horse out of the stable. That will finish him, and end the worry of suspense."

He walked into his bedroom and came back in a few minutes dressed to go out and carrying a lantern and two Winchesters from the stock downstairs. "They are oiled and loaded," he said, handing me one of the guns. "Let's go. Get your overcoat; we may have to wait long; it may be chilly."

Going from the store to the stable-yard, he spoke back at me: "I haven't told our noble constable nor any of the negroes on the place; they all talk too much."

He stopped at the barn door to make sure that the staple was loose enough for easy access. I looked around. The warm vapor in the air, hinting at rain, hid the stars. Already the trees were leafing out, and the four or five oaks in the yard were blurred shadows, blacker than the night.

On an outside ladder we climbed to the feed-loft door, let ourselves in, and descended through an opening to the stalls below. These were all in a row,

twelve in number, separated by cross-planks a few inches apart. Six of the stalls were empty, some of the winter's accumulation of stock having been sold in the past month. Mr. Stettler indicated two empty places opposite the door, between which was a stall occupied by a dimly seen feeding animal.

"I'll take the one on the right, you the one on the left," he said. "If we kept close together we might talk at the wrong time. There is nothing to do now except to wait; if anybody comes, let him get just through the door with a horse, then run out. I'll be there."

Going with him into the stall he had chosen for himself, I saw him climb up into the corn-box and sit down. I walked around to mine, got into the shallow box, and sat leaning back into the corner made by the partition and the rear wall, finding the position unexpectedly comfortable.

By this time my eyes had grown so used to the darkness that I could discern the outline and bulk of the horse between Mr. Stettler and myself. All along the line the animals were still standing up, fussing noisily with their lips over the bare corncobs that no longer held any grain, crunching the shucks and sheaf oats as second choice. Now and then a horse lifted his head over a partition to tease a fellow-feeder; there were angry squeals and little thumpings of tentative kicks, to show what the defending animal would have done if he were only out in the open where he could use his heels freely. The brown, mellow odors of corn and hay and oats, the pungent ammoniac manure

smell of the stalls, were pleasant in my nostrils. A spear of ice plunged through my backbone as a rat, on his way down the line of feed-boxes, ran across my legs; and I could not help exclaiming: "Damn!" I listened to hear if the rat would shock one emotional, even if profane, word from the impassive trader; he said nothing.

After a while the squealing and kicking and rattling at the troughs grew less, and here and there a long, luxurious sigh told that a horse had lain down for the night. I heard the fresh straw crackle as the animal between us crushed down on it with a deep grunt of satisfaction. Everything was now so quiet that I ran my hand over and over the projecting parts of the Winchester on my lap, telling myself what they were for, that I might keep awake.

It was in the neighborhood of midnight—for the roosters all about over the country were crowing, and they are approximately correct—when there was a slight screaming noise at the door. Then it opened, slowly, wide. A figure stepped inside, stopped, seemed to be listening. Closing the door almost to, he flitted to the far end of the stable, and started back down the black passage behind the stalls, hoarsely whispering a tense call that sounded like: "C'up, c'up, meh lady."

Before he had reached me the horse in the next place was whinnying eagerly, joyously. I saw the almost imperceptible figure slide by my hiding-place; and looking through the partition, I could make him out, sitting on the straw, and I think his arms were around the horse's neck. He was crooning ecstatic

gibberish, like a mother over her child; the horse was answering with tiny, soft, nuzzling whinnies from deep down in the throat. After a pause I heard words that I could understand.

"Ole Mistis, we is gwine away f'om heah. Ain' nuffin heah fer you an' me now, an' dee wants to keep us apaht. Out yander in de woods, 'cross de road, I got ole Julius tied a-waitin' fer us. I reckon you ain' forgot dat triflin' ole yaller houn' yit, is you? He been mighty pore comp'ny since you lef' us, Ole Mistis; but den I spec I been mighty pore comp'ny fer him—since you been gone away. Yassum, an' I got fifty year o' cawn in a sack fer you, an' a snack er two fer me an' Jule."

He was stroking her neck. Then his hands must have gone feeling along her ribs.

"Ole Mistis, you sho' is gittin' fat. I been seein' you git so roun' an' slick an' fine. I reckon you ain't wantin' to run away wif ole Jeff. I guess Mr. Settler is good to he animals, anyhow. An' de Lawd on'y knows whut kind o' luck we gwine to strak, an' it may be, meh lady, you ain' brash to 'lope to Louisiany wif ole Jule an' me.

"An' yit, Ole Mistis, I been prayin' fer good luck fer us. In de dead o' night, free times, I went to Mount Calvary Chapel, I crawled th'oo de winder, an' I prayed fer luck fer you an' me. I kinder feel, meh lady, 'at luck have changed fer old Jeff at las'.

"By mawnin' we gwine to be acrost de Louisiany line, an' I spec in less'n a week you an' me is gwine to be settled on some o' dat black swampy lan', richer'n gol' fer cotton an' cane. Somebody gwine to rent me

lan' over dar ef I got you, Ole Mistis; an' we gwine to be so deep sunk in de piney woods 'at nobody f'om heah evah will fin' us. Yassum, we gwine to have a cotton crap in de groun' dis year yit, we sho' is. We gwine to see our own cotton a-comin' up green outen de groun'.

"Now git up, Ole Mistis, we mus' be a-movin' on. Git up, meh lady."

The mare got to her feet, and I could see, dimly, a rope hanging from her neck. She backed out of the stall. The stooping, stealthy little figure with her pushed open the door, looked out, and, coming back slowly, laid his head against her neck.

"An', Ole Mistis, even ef we do strak bad luck in Louisiany, we gwine to be togedder. Ain' dat a whole lot? Wellum, hit is fer me. Now we is gwine away f'om heah; an' thank Mister Stettler kin'ly fer his cawn an' oats. He good to he animals, anyhow. Lawdy, Lawdy, I bet ole Jule gwine to teck on scan'lous when he see you, meh lady. Now come on, Ole Mistis."

He stepped out through the door cautiously. It closed behind him, but, the fastening pulling loose, it swung open again. I heard the soft fall of the horse's feet in the white sand of the hoof-dug yard. I listened to catch the sound of Mr. Stettler stirring. He was not stirring. I heard the great oak latch of the stable-yard gate lift and presently fall into place again.

"Mr. Stettler?" I called.

"Yes."

"Did you hear?"

"Yes."

Down the line of stalls a horse sighed gratefully.

In a corner a cricket was chirping. Outside, the wind moving through the little green leaves was as the faint hubbub of a multitudinous gathering of tiny voices far away. Out beyond the store, across the road, in the clump of woods, I listened to hear a horse bellowing. I found my fingers feeling over and over the projecting points of the Winchester on my lap, not to keep awake now. After a while I noticed that they were rubbing back and forth along the gun-barrel where it was wet.

I don't know how many minutes passed. I heard the oak latch lift again, the soft fall of feet on the hoof-dug ground, a low whinnying coming nearer. A figure stepped hurriedly through the door and into the stall between Mr. Stettler and me.

"Ole Mistis, I cain' do it. Ef I hadn't 'a' named you dat name I could 'a' done it."

Then the figure ran out through the door. After a while I slipped down from the feed-box, went to my room, and crawled into bed. A considerable time after that I heard Mr. Stettler come in and get into his bed.

The next day Jeff and his small belongings were moved to one of Mr. Stettler's small farms. Ole Mistis was with him. I left that part of the country the next year, but Mr. Stettler occasionally writes to me now. He always says Jeff and his Ole Mistis are doing very well. I never have any fear about them. Having had supper one evening, several weeks after the night in the stable, Mr. Stettler, turning his back and walking to a rear window, said rather fiercely: "They are to be together until the end."

THE HORSE THIEF

BY

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

"THE HORSE THIEF" is a notable exception to the theorem that poems about horses are generally rare, consistently poor. Such is its excellence that it demands inclusion of a prose anthology. It resounds with the sonorous music and bold beauty that has given William Rose Benét place among the more gifted of American poets.

THE HORSE THIEF¹

THERE he moved, cropping the grass at the purple
canyon's lip.

His mane was mixed with the moonlight that silvered
his snow-white side,
For the moon sailed out of a cloud with the wake of a
spectral ship.

I crouched and I crawled on my belly, my lariat coil
looped wide.

Dimly and dark the mesas broke on the starry sky.

A pall covered every color of their gorgeous glory at
noon.

I smelt the yucca and mesquite, and stifled my heart's
quick cry,

And wormed and crawled on my belly to where he
moved against the moon!

Some Moorish barb was that mustang's sire. His lines
were beyond all wonder.

From the prick of his ears to the flow of his tail he
ached in my throat and eyes.

Steel and velvet grace! As the prophet says, God
had "clothed his neck with thunder."

Oh, marvelous with the drifting cloud he drifted
across the skies!

¹ From "The Burglar of the Zodiac," by William Rose Benét.
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And then I was near at hand—crouched, and balanced,
and cast the coil;

And the moon was smothered in cloud and the rope
through my hands with a rip!

But somehow I gripped and clung, with the blood in
my brain aboil,—

With a turn round the rugged tree-stump there on
the purple canyon's lip.

Right into the stars he reared aloft, his red eye rolling
and raging.

He whirled and sunfished and lashed, and rocked the
earth to thunder and flame.

He squealed like a regular devil horse. I was haggard
and spent and aging—

Roped clean, but almost storming clear, his fury too
fierce to tame.

And I cursed myself for a tenderfoot moon-dazzled to
play the part,

But I was doubly desperate then, with the posse
pulled out from town,

Or I'd never have tried it. I only knew I must get a
mount and a start.

The filly had snapped her foreleg short. I had had
to shoot her down.

So there he struggled and strangled, and I snubbed him
around the tree.

Nearer, a little nearer—hoofs planted, and loll-
ing tongue—

Till a sudden slack pitched me backward. He reared
right on top of me.

Mother of God—that moment! He missed me . . .
and up I swung.

Somehow, gone daft completely and clawing a bunch
of his mane,

As he stumbled and tripped in the lariat, there I
was—up and astride

And cursing for seven counties! And the mustang?
Just insane!

Crack-bang! went the rope; we cannoned off the
tree—then—gods, that ride!

A rocket—that's all, a rocket! I dug with my teeth
and nails.

Why, we never hit even the high spots (though I
hardly remember things),

But I heard a monstrous booming like a thunder of
flapping sails

When he spread—well, *call* me a liar!—when he
spread those wings, those wings!

So white that my eyes were blinded, thick-feathered
and wide unfurled

They beat the air into billows. We sailed, and the
earth was gone.

Canyon and desert and mesa withered below, with the
world.

And then I knew that mustang; for I—was Bellerophon!

Yes, glad as the Greek, and mounted on a horse of the
elder gods,

With never a magic bridle or a fountain-mirror nigh!
My chaps and spurs and holster must have looked it?

What's the odds?

I'd a leg over lightning and thunder, careering across
the sky!

And forever streaming before me, fanning my fore-
head cool,

Flowed a mane of molten silver; and just before my
thighs

(As I gripped his velvet-muscled ribs, while I cursed
myself for a fool),

The steady pulse of those pinions—their wonderful
fall and rise!

The bandanna I bought in Bowie blew loose and
whipped from my neck.

My shirt was stuck to my shoulders and ribboning
out behind.

The stars were dancing, wheeling and glancing, drip-
ping with smirk and beck.

The clouds were flowing, dusking and glowing.
We rode a roaring wind.

We soared through the silver starlight to knock at the
planets' gates.

New shimmering constellations came whirling into
our ken.

Red stars and green and golden swung out of the void
that waits

For man's great last adventure; the Signs took shape
—and then

I knew the lines of that Centaur the moment I saw
him come!

The musical-box of the heavens all around us rolled
to a tune

That tinkled and chimed and thrilled with silver
sounds that struck you dumb,

As if some archangel were grinding out the music of
the moon.

Melody-drunk on the Milky Way, as we swept and
soared hilarious,

Full in our pathway, sudden he stood—the Centaur
of the Stars,

Flashing from head and hoofs and breast! I knew him
for Sagittarius.

He reared, and bent and drew his bow. He crouched
as a boxer spars.

Flung back on his haunches, weird he loomed—then
leapt—and the dim void lightened.

Old White Wings shied and swerved aside, and fled
from the splendor-shod.

Through a flashing welter of worlds we charged. I
knew why my horse was frightened.

He *had* two faces—a dog's and a man's—that
Babylonian god!

Also, he followed us real as fear. Ping! went an arrow
past.

My broncho buck-jumped, humping high. We
plunged . . . I guess that's all!

I lay on the purple canyon's lip, when I opened my
eyes at last—

Stiff and sore and my head like a drum, but I
broke no bones in the fall.

So you know—and now you may string me up. Such
was the way you caught me.

Thank you for letting me tell it straight, though
you never could greatly care.

For I took a horse that wasn't mine! . . . But
there's one the heavens brought me,

And I'll hang right happy, because I know he is
waiting for me up there.

From creamy muzzle to cannon-bone, by God, he's
a peerless wonder!

He is steel and velvet and furnace-fire, and death's
supremest prize;

And never again shall be roped on earth that neck that
is "clothed with thunder" . . .

String me up, Dave! Go dig my grave! *I rode him
across the skies.*

"YOUR HAND-WRITING, SIR"

BY

WHYTE MELVILLE

THE writings of Major Whyte Melville on horses bear the stamp of that authority which comes only from long experience. A splendid soldier—he was a member of the Coldstream Guards, and served with the Turkish Cavalry in the Crimean War—the England of his day found him the most pleasant of gentlemen. He was occasionally called the poet laureate of the hunting field—being the author, among other songs, of the great favorite of hunt-dinners, “Drink, Puppy, Drink.”

“YOUR HAND-WRITING, SIR”¹

“MORNIN’, sir,” says Mr. Sloper, scenting a customer as he accosts his guest. “Oh, it’s you, is it, Mr. Sawyer? Won’t ye step in and set down after your walk? Take a glass of mild ale and a crust of bread and cheese, or a drop of sherry or anythink?”

“No hunting to-day, Job,” answers the visitor, declining the refreshment; “so I just toddled over to see how you’re getting on, and have a look round the stables; no harm in looking, you know.”

Mr. Sloper’s face assumes an expression of profound mystery. “I’m glad you come over to-day, sir,” he says, in a tone of confidential frankness, “of all days in the year. I’ve a ’orse here, as I should like to ast your opinion about—a gent like *you* as knows what a ’unter really is. And so you should, Mr. Sawyer, for there’s no man alive takes greater liberties with ’em when they *can* go and do it. And I’ve got one in that box, as I think, just *is* more than curious.”

“Would he carry me?” asks Mr. Sawyer, with well-affected indifference, as if he had not come over expressly to find one that would. “Not that I want a horse, you know; but if I saw one I liked very much, and you didn’t price him too high; why I *might* be induced to buy against next season, perhaps.”

Job took his hands out of his coat-pockets, and

¹ From “Market Harborough,” by Whyte Melville.

spread them abroad, as it were to dry. The action denoted extreme purity and candour.

‘‘No; I don’t think as he ought to carry *you*, sir,’’ was the unexpected reply. ‘‘Now, I ain’t a-going to tell you a lie, Mr. Sawyer. This horse didn’t *ought* to be ridden, not the way you take and ride him, Mr. Sawyer; leastways not over such a blind heart-breaking country as this here. He’s too good, he is, for that kind of work; he ought to be in Leicestershire, *he ought*; the Harborough country, that’s the country for him. He’s too fast for us, and that’s the truth. Only, to be sure, we have a vast of plough here-about, and I never see such a sticker through dirt. It makes no odds to him, pasture or plough, and the sweetest hack ever I clapped eyes on besides. However, you shall judge for yourself, Mr. Sawyer. I won’t ask you to believe *me*. You’ve a quicker eye to a horse than I have, by a long chalk, and I’d sooner have your opinion than my own. I *would* now, and that’s the truth!’’

Our purchaser began to think he might possibly have hit upon the animal at last. Often as he had been at the game, and often as he had been disappointed, he was still sanguine enough to believe he might draw the prize-ticket in the lottery at any time. As I imagine every man who pulls on his boots to go out hunting has a sort of vague hope that to-day may be his day of triumph with the hounds, so the oldest and wariest of us cannot go into a dealer’s yard without a sort of half-conscious idea that there *must* be a trump card somewhere in the pack, and it *may* be our luck to hold it as well as another’s.

But Sloper, like the rest of his trade, was not going to show his game first. It seems to be a maxim with all salesmen to prove their customers with inferior articles before they come to the real thing. Mr. Sawyer had to walk through a four-stall stable, and inspect, preparatory to declining, a mealy bay cob, a lame grey, a broken-winded chestnut, and an enormous brown animal, very tall, very narrow, very ugly, with extremely upright forelegs and shoulders to match. The latter his owner affirmed to be “*an extraordinary shaped un,*” as no doubt he was. A little playful badinage on the merits of this last enlivened the visit.

“What will you take for the brown, Sloper, if I buy him at so much the foot?” said the customer, as they emerged into the fresh air.

“Say ten pound a foot, sir!” answered Job, with the utmost gravity, “and ten over, because *he always has a foot to spare*. Come now, Mr. Sawyer, I can afford to let a good customer like you have that horse for *fefty*. *Fefty* guineas, or even *pounds*, sir, to *you*. I got him in a bad debt, you see, sir:—it’s Bible truth I’m telling ye;—and he only stood *me* in forty-seven pounds ~~ten~~, *and* a sov. I gave the man as brought him over. He’s not everybody’s horse, Mr. Sawyer, that isn’t; but I think he’ll carry *you* remarkably well.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever give him a chance,” was the rejoinder. “Come, Job, we’re burning daylight: let’s go and have a look at the crack.”

One individual had been listening to the above conversation with thrilling interest. This was no less a personage than Barney, Mr. Sloper’s head groom, gen-

eral factotum, and rough-rider in ordinary—an official whose business it was to ride anything at anything, for anybody who asked him. He was a little old man, with one eye, a red handkerchief, and the general appearance of a post-boy on half-pay; a sober fellow, too, and as brave as King Richard; yet had he expressed himself strongly about this said brown horse, the previous evening, to the maid-of-all-work. “He’s the wussest we’ have had yet,” was his fiat. “It’s nateral for ’em to fall; but when *he* falls, he’s all over a chap till he’s crumpled him.” So his heroic heart beat freely when they adjourned to the neighboring box.

Mr. Sloper threw the door open with an air. It must be confessed he seldom had one that would bear, without preparation, a minute inspection from the eye of a sportsman; but he knew *this* was a sound one, and made the most of it. Clothed and hooded, littered to the hocks, and sheeted to the tail, there was yet something about his general appearance that fascinated Mr. Sawyer at once. Job saw the spell working, and abstained from disturbing it. As far as could be seen, the animal was a long, low, well-bred-looking roan, with short flat legs, large clean hocks, and swelling muscular thighs. His supple skin threw off a bloom, as if he was in first-rate condition, and when, laying his ears back and biting the manger, he lifted a fore-leg, as it were, to expostulate with his visitors, the hoof was round, open, and well-developed, as blue, and to all appearance as hard, as a flint.

“Has he fashion enough, think ye, sir?” asked Job,

at length, breaking the silence. “Strip him, Barney,” he added, taking the straw from his mouth.

The roan winced, and stamped, and whisked his tail, and set his back up during the process; but when it was concluded, Mr. Sawyer could not but confess to himself, that if he was only as good as he looked, he would do.

“Feel his legs, Mr. Sawyer!” observed the dealer, turning away to conceal the triumph that *would* ooze out. “There’s some legs—there’s some hocks and thighs! Talk of loins, and look where his tail’s set on. I never saw such manners in the hunting-field. Six-year-old—not a speck or blemish; bold as a bull, and gentle as a lady; he can go as fast as you can clap your hands, and stay till the middle of the week after next—jump a town, too, and never turn his head from the place you put him at. As handy as a fiddle, as neat as a pink, and worth all the money to carry in your eye when you go out to buy hunters. But what’s the use of talking about it to a judge like you? Lay your leg over him—only just lay your leg over him, Mr. Sawyer. I don’t want you to buy him! but get on him and feel his action, just as a favour to *me*.”

Our friend had made up his mind he would do so from the first. There was no mistaking the appearance of the animal; so good was it, that he had but two misgivings—some rank unsoundness, to account for its being there, or so high a price as to be beyond his means; for Mr. Sawyer was too fond of the sport to give a sum that he could not replace for so perishable an article as a hunter.

He was no mean equestrian, our friend, and quite at home on a strange horse. As he drew the curb-rein gently through his fingers, the roan dropped his long, lean head, and champed the bit playfully, tossing a speck of froth back on his rider's boots.

"You've got a mouth, at any rate," quoth Mr. Sawyer, and trotted him gently down the hard road, the animal stepping freely and gaily under him, full of life and spirits. The customer liked his mount, and couldn't help showing it. "May I lark him?" said he, pulling up after a short canter to and fro on the turf by the wayside, during which Job Sloper had been exercising his mental arithmetic in what we may term a sum of problematical addition.

"Take him into the close, sir," was the generous reply; "put him at anything you like. If you can get him into one of these fences, I'll give him to you!"

So Mr. Sawyer sat down to jump a low hedge and ditch, then stood up, and caught hold of the roan's head, and sent him a cracker through the adjoining plough, and across a larger fence into a pasture, and back again over a fair flight of rails, and lost his flat shooting-hat, and rucked his plaid trousers up to his knees; and Sloper marked his kindling eye and glowing cheek, and knew that he had *landed* him.

"Walk him about for ten minutes before you do him over," said that worthy to Barney, as Mr. Sawyer dismounted and the latter brought him his hat. "And now, sir," added the hospitable dealer, "you can't go away without tasting my cheese—the same you liked last time, you know. Walk in, sir; this way, and mind

the step, if *you* please,” So speaking, Mr. Sloper ushered his guest into a neat little parlour with a strong odour of preserved tobacco-smoke, where a clean cloth set off a nice luncheon of bread and cheese, flanked by a foaming jug of strong ale and a decanter of oily-brown sherry.

And herein the dealer showed his knowledge of human nature, and his discrimination in the different characteristics of the species. Had his guest been some generous scion of the aristocracy, with more money than nerves, he would have *primed* him first, and put him up to ride afterwards. But he knew his man. He was well aware that Mr. Sawyer required no stimulant to make him jump, but a strong one to induce him to part with his money; so he proposed the luncheon after he was satisfied that his customer was pleased with his mount.

Neither of them touched on business during the meal, the conversation consisting chiefly of the runs that had lately taken place in the Old Country, with many an inferred compliment to the good riding of the possible purchaser. Then Mr. Sawyer produced the Laranagas and offered one to Job, who bit it, and wet it, and smoked it, as men do who are more used to clay pipes, and then they went back to the stable to see the roan done up.

The gallop and the ale were working in Mr. Sawyer's brain, but he didn't see his way into the roan at a hundred; so he obstinately held his tongue. The dealer was obliged to break the ice.

“I'd take it very friendly of you, sir, if you'd give

me your honest opinion of that horse,” said he, waving the Laranaga towards the animal. “I fancy he’s too good for our country; and I’ve a brother-in-law down in Rutland as wants to have him very bad; he’s just the cut, so he says, for these Melton gents; and he’s a good judge, is my brother-in-law, and a pretty rider to boot. He’d give me any price, too; but then, you know, sir, askin’ your pardon, it isn’t always ready money between relations; and that cuts the other way again, as a man may say. What do you think, Mr. Sawyer?”

“I’ll find out what he wants for him, at any rate,” thought the customer. “What’s his figure?” was the abrupt rejoinder.

Mr. Sloper hesitated. “A hundred and—” *eighty*, he was going to say; but seeing his customer’s eye resting on the roan’s back ribs—a point in which the horse was somewhat deficient—he dropped at once to seventy, and regretted it the next moment when he caught the expression of the listener’s face.

“It isn’t *even* money,” answered Mr. Sawyer, without, however, making the sort of face he had done several times before, when he had refused to give double the sum at which he had eventually purchased. “I should say you might git a hundred and twenty for him down there, if you’d luck. But it’s a great risk—a great risk—and a long distance; and perhaps have him sent back to you in the spring. If I wanted a horse, I’d give you a hundred for him, though he isn’t exactly my sort. A hundred!—I’ll tell you what, Sloper, I’ll be hanged if I won’t *chance* it. I’ll *give*

you a hundred—guineas—come! Money down and no questions asked.”

“I can’t warrant him sound,” answered Mr. Sloper; “and I’d rather *you* had him than anybody. But it’s childish talking of a hundred guineas and that horse on the same afternoon. However, I thank you kindly all the same, Mr. Sawyer. Barney! shut the box up. Come in, sir, and have one glass of sherry before you start. The evenings get chill at this time of year, and that’s old sherry, and won’t hurt you no more than milk. He *is* a nice horse, Mr. Sawyer, I think—a *very* nice horse, and I’m glad you’re pleased with him.”

So they returned into the little parlour, and stirred up the fire, and finished the bottle of old sherry; nor is it necessary to remark that with the concluding glass of that generous fluid the roan became the property of John Standish Sawyer, under the following somewhat complicated arrangement: That he was to give an immediate cheque for a hundred and forty pounds, and ten pounds at the end of the season; which latter donation was to be increased to twenty if he should sell him for anything over two hundred—a contingency which the dealer was pleased to observe amounted to what he called “a moral.”

The new owner went to look at him once more in the stable, and thought him the nicest horse he ever saw in his life. The walk home, too, was delightful, till the sherry had evaporated, when it became rather tedious; and at dinner-time, Mr. Sawyer was naturally less hungry than thirsty. All the evening, however, he congratulated himself on having done a good day’s

work. All night, too, he dreamed of the roan; and on waking resolved to call him "Hotspur."

When the horse came home next day he certainly looked rather smaller than his new owner had fancied. Old Isaac, too, growled out his untoward opinion that he "looked a sort as would work very *light*." But then Isaac always grumbled—it was the old groom's way of enjoying himself.

NORTHWIND
BY
HERBERT RAVENEL SASS

LIKE his fellow author-naturalist, Ernest Thompson Seton, Sass confines his pen to accounts of adventures in green places. With him, as with Seton, "a knowledge of the birds and animals and all things that live in freedom—sanctified in the blue outdoors—is the one pursuit of man that never palls."

NORTHWIND ¹

It was in the days when Moytoy of Tellequo was High Chief of the Cherokee Nation that the wild chestnut stallion known afterward as Northwind left the savannas of the Choctaw country and traveled to the Overhills of the Cherokees. He made this long journey because the Choctaw horse hunters had been pressing him hard. A rumor had run through the tribe, started perhaps by some learned conjurer or medicine man, that the tall, long-maned chestnut stallion, king of the wild horse herds, was descended from the famous steed which De Soto rode when, many years before, he led his Spaniards through the Choctaw lands far into the Mississippi wilderness and perished there.

This rumor sharpened the eagerness of the younger braves, for it was well known that De Soto's horse had magic in him. That spring they hunted the wild stallion more persistently than ever; and at last, taking two sorrel mares with him, he struck northeastward, seeking safer pastures.

He did not find them in the Overhills, as the Cherokees called the high Smokies and the Blue Ridge where they lived and hunted. At dawn one May morning, as he lay on a bed of fresh sweet-scented grass near the middle of a natural pasture known as Long Meadow, a warning came to him. He raised his head high and

¹ From "The Way of the Wild," by Herbert Ravenel Sass. Copyright, 1925, by Minton, Balch and Company.

sniffed the air, then jumped nimbly to his feet. For a half minute, however, he did not rouse the two mares lying on either side of him: and they, if they were aware of his movement, were content to await his signal.

He gave the signal presently, and the mares rose, their ears pricked, their nostrils quivering. A light breeze blew across the meadow from the north. The stallion faced south, for his sensitive nose told him that no foeman was approaching from the opposite direction. He knew that his ears had not deceived him and that the sound which he had heard was near at hand. But he did not know the exact quarter from which the sound had come; and though his large eyes were well adapted to the dim light, nowhere could he discern that sinister weaving movement of the tall close-growing grass which would reveal the stealthy approach of bear or puma. So, for some minutes, he waited motionless, his head held high, every faculty keyed to the utmost.

Twenty yards away down the wind, Corane the Raven, young warrior of the Cherokees, crouching low in the grass, watched the wild stallion eagerly. Himself invisible, he could see his quarry more and more plainly as the light grew stronger; and he knew already that the wits of this slim, long-maned chestnut horse, which had come over the mountains from the west, were worthy of his beauty and strength. With all his art—and the Raven prided himself on his skill as a still hunter—and with all the conditions in his favor, he had been baffled. Having located the beds of the

wild horses, he had left his own horse, Manito-Kinibic, at the edge of the woods and had crept through the grass as furtively as a lynx. But his approach had been detected when he was yet five lance lengths distant, and since then the stallion had made no false move, had committed no error of judgment.

Corane the Raven knew the wild horses well. Most of them were small and wiry, already approaching the mustang type of later years; but in those early days, before inbreeding had proceeded very far, an occasional stallion still revealed unmistakably the fine qualities of blooded forbears. From his hiding place in the grass the young warrior, naked except for a light loin cloth of deer hide, studied the great chestnut carefully, thoughtfully, marveling at the lithe symmetry of his powerful but beautifully molded form, admiring his coolness and steadiness in the face of danger. The stallion showed no sign of fear. He did not fidget or caper nervously. Only his head moved slowly back and forth, while with all his powers of sight, scent, and hearing he strove to locate the precise spot where his enemy was lurking.

The Raven smiled in approval; and presently he applied a test of another kind.

With his long spear he pushed the grass stems in front of him, causing the tops of the tall blades to quiver and wave. The movement was slight, yet even in the pale morning light the wild horse saw it. He watched the spot intently for some moments. Then he moved slowly and cautiously forward, the mares following in his tracks. He moved neither toward the

danger nor away from it. Instead, he circled it, and the Raven realized at once what the stallion's purpose was. He intended to get down wind from the suspected spot, so that his nose could tell him whether an enemy hid there, and, if so, what kind of enemy it was.

The young warrior waited, curious to see the outcome. Suddenly the stallion's head jerked upward. He was well down the wind now and a puff of air had filled his nostrils with the man-scent. A moment he stood at gaze; and in that moment one of the mares caught the telltale scent, snorted with terror, and bolted at full speed. Close behind her raced the other mare; while the stallion, wheeling gracefully, followed at a slower pace, his eyes searching the grassy plain ahead.

The Raven had risen to his feet and stood in plain view, but the chestnut stallion scarcely glanced at him again. He was no longer a menace. Of greater importance now were other dangers unknown, invisible, yet possibly imminent.

The natural meadows of lush grass and maiden cane were perilous places for the unwary. In them the puma set his ambush; there the black bear often lurked; hidden in that dense cover the Indian horse hunters sometimes waited with their snares. The mares, in a frenzy of panic, were beyond their protector's control. Their nostrils full of the man-smell, they had forgotten all other perils. But the stallion had not forgotten. Before the mares had run fifty yards the thing that he feared happened.

Out of the grass a black bulk heaved upward, reared high with huge hairy arms outspread, fell forward with

a deep grunting roar on the haunch of the foremost mare. Screaming like a mad thing, the mare reeled, staggered, and went down. In a fraction of a second she was on her feet again, but the big mountain black bear, hurling himself on her hindquarters, crushed them to the ground.

Corane the Raven, racing forward at the sound of the mare's frenzied scream, was near enough to see part of what happened. He saw the wild stallion rear to his utmost height and come down with battering forefeet on the bear's back. He heard the stallion's loud squeal of fury, the bear's hoarse grunt of rage and pain. Next moment the mare was up again and running for her life, the stallion cantering easily behind her.

When the Raven reached the spot the bear had vanished, and the young Indian, marveling at what he had seen, ran toward the wood's edge, where his swift roan, Manito-Kinibic, awaited him.

In this way began the chase of the chestnut stallion—Northwind, as he was afterward known—that long hunt which Corane the Raven made long ago even before the time of Atta-Kulla-Kulla the Wise. It was Dunmore, the trader, who first brought down from the Overhills the story of that hunt and told it one night in Nick Rounder's tavern in Charles Town. Dunmore had it from the Raven himself; and the Raven was known among the white traders and hunters as a truthful man. But he was known also as a man of few words, while Dunmore, great hunter and famous Indian fighter though he was, had a tongue more fluent than a play actor's.

So it was probably Dunmore who put color into the story. The tale appealed to him, for he was a lover of horses; and this story of the feud between Northwind, the wild stallion, and Manito-Kinibic, the Raven's roan, concerned two horses which were paladins of their kind.

For the hunt which began that morning in Long Meadow became in large measure a contest between these two.

It happened that the Raven had returned not long before from a peace mission to the Choctaws, and while in their country he had heard of the wonderful wild horse which was said to have in him the blood of De Soto's steed and which had vanished from the savannas after defying all attempts to capture him. In the Overhills wild horses were rare. When the Raven found the tracks of three of them near Long Meadow about sunset one May day, he thought it worth while to sleep that night near the meadow's edge and have a look at the horses in the morning.

So at dawn he tried to stalk them in their beds, and the moment he saw the wild stallion rise from his sleeping place in the grass he knew that the great chestnut horse of which the Choctaws had spoken stood before him. That morning in Long Meadow he knew also that he could not rest until he had taken this matchless wild horse for his own.

It would be a long hunt, for the stallion would not linger in the Overhills. Small bands of wild horses occasionally crossed the mountains from the west, and always these migrating bands traveled fast, pausing

only to feed. Yet, though the hunt might carry him far, Corane the Raven, as he ran swiftly across Long Meadow toward the wood's edge where he had left Manito-Kinibic, had little doubt as to its issue. This wild stallion was a great horse, beautiful, swift, and strong—by far the finest wild horse that the Raven had ever seen.

But there was one other that was his equal in all things except beauty; and that other was Manito-Kinibic, the Raven's roan.

There was no chief of the Cherokees, the Creeks, or the Choctaws who had a horse that could match Manito-Kinibic. His like had never been known in the Overhills. Dunmore, the trader, had seen him and had wondered whence he came: for, though the Raven had taken him from the Chickasaws, whose country lay west of the mountains, it was plain that this big-boned, burly roan was not of the western or southern wild breed, while his name, which in the white man's tongue meant Rattlesnake, had to Dunmore's ear a northern sound.

Thick-bodied, wide-headed, short-maned, heavy-eared, Manito-Kinibic was almost grotesquely ugly, yet in his very ugliness there was a sinister, almost reptilian fascination, heightened by the metallic sheen of his red-speckled coat, the odd flatness of his head, and the fixed, stony glare of his small, deep-set eyes. No warrior of the Cherokees except the Raven could ride him. Few could even approach him, for his temper was as arrogant as that of the royal serpent for which he was named.

There lurked in him, too, a craftiness recalling the subtle cunning which the red men attributed to the rattlesnake, and because of which they venerated the king of serpents almost as a god; and, with this craftiness he harbored a savage hatred of the wild creatures which the Indians hunted, so that on the hunt he was even more eager, even more relentless than his rider. It was the Raven's boast that Manito-Kinibic could follow a trail which would baffle many a red hunter; that he could scent a game at a greater distance than the wolf; that his ears were as keen as those of the deer; that he was as crafty as the fox and as ruthless as the weasel; and that he feared no wild beast of the forest, not even the puma itself.

Such was the horse that Corane the Raven rode on his long hunt. From the beginning of that hunt until its end Manito-Kinibic seemed to live for one thing only—the capture of the wild stallion whose scent he sniffed for the first time that morning in Long Meadow after the wild horse's encounter with the bear.

A few minutes after that encounter the Raven reached the woods' edge where he had left the big roan, vaulted upon his back and, riding as swiftly as was prudent through the tall grass and beds of maiden cane, struck the trail of the three wild horses near the spot where they had passed from the meadow at its lower end into the woods.

The trail was plain to the eye. The scent was strong where the wild horses had brushed through the rank grass. From that moment Manito-Kinibic knew what game it was that his rider hunted; and in that moment

all the strange, smoldering hatred of his nature was focused upon the wild stallion which, as his nose told him, had passed that way with one or two mares.

Manito-Kinibic leaped forward with long bounds, his nostrils dilated, his ears flattened against his head. Corane the Raven, smiling grimly, let him go. It might be true, as the Choctaws believed, that the wild stallion was sprung from the mighty horse of De Soto himself. But surely this huge, implacable horse that now followed on the wild one's trail must have in his veins the blood of the great black steed which the Evil Spirit bestrode when he stood, wrapped in cloud on the bare summit of Younaguska Peak and hurled those awful arrows of his that flashed like lightning.

Northwind, the chestnut stallion, had passed within sight of Younaguska, highest of the Balsams, which men in these days call Caney Fork Bald; but that somber mountain lay far behind him now, for he had crossed both the main ranges of the mountain bulwark and had begun to descend the eastern slope of the second and lesser range. From Long Meadow he led his mares southeastward at a steady gait, following in general the trend of the valleys and the downward-sloping ridges. The injured mare, though her haunch was raw and bloody where the bear's claws had raked it, kept pace with her companions; and the three traveled fast, pausing only once or twice to drink at some cold, clear, hemlock-shaded stream.

For the most part their course carried them through a virgin forest of oak, chestnut, hickory, and other broad-leaved trees clothing the ridges, the slopes, and

most of the valleys. Occasionally the stallion chose his own way, though as a rule he followed the narrow trails made by the deer; but when in the early forenoon he found a broader path through the woods, well marked and evidently often used, he turned into it unhesitatingly and followed it without swerving. The wild horse of the southwestern savannas recognized this path at once. It was one of the highways of the buffalo herds, a road trodden deep and hard through many centuries by thousands of hoofs.

The buffaloes were far less abundant now on the eastern side of the mountains. Although the white men's settlements were still confined to a strip along the coast, white hunters sometimes penetrated the foothills and white traders encouraged the taking of pelts. The deer still abounded in almost incredible numbers, but the eastern buffalo herds were withdrawing gradually across the Appalachians. Small droves, however, still ranged the eastern foothills and kept open the deep-worn paths; and the main buffalo roads across the mountain barrier, wider than the narrow buffalo ruts of the western plains, were still highways for wild creatures of many kinds.

It was one of these main roads that the chestnut stallion and his mares were following, a road which would lead them with many windings down from the mountains into the hills and through the hills to the broad belt of rolling lands beyond which lay the swamps and savannas of the Atlantic plain.

All the forenoon the Raven trailed his quarry. Both to the roan stallion and to his rider the trail was

a plain one; and when the tracks of the wild horses turned into the buffalo path the Raven knew that he had only to follow that highway through the woods. With a guttural word he restrained Manito-Kinibic's savage eagerness. So long as the wild horses kept to the buffalo road the task of following them would be simple. The Raven preferred that, for the present, the chestnut stallion should not know that he was being pursued.

Half a bowshot ahead of the young warrior a troop of whitetails crossed the path, following a deer trail leading down the slope to a laurel-bordered stream. Once, at a greater distance, he saw a puma come out of the woods into the path, sit for a moment on its haunches, then vanish at a bound in the forest on the other side. Again and again wild turkeys ran into the woods on either hand, seldom taking wing; and with monotonous regularity ruffed grouse rose a few paces in front of him and whirled swiftly away.

About noon he killed a cock grouse in the path, pinning the bird to the ground with a light cane arrow tipped with bone; and he had scarcely remounted when around a curve of the path appeared the shaggy bulk of a huge buffalo bull. A moment the great beast stood motionless, blinking in astonishment, his massive head hanging low. Then, with surprising nimbleness, he turned and darted around the bend of the trail.

The Raven heard the stamping and trampling of many hoofs and gave Manito-Kinibic his head. The roan bounded forward and almost in an instant reached the bend of the path. At a word from his rider he

halted; and the Raven, quivering with excitement, gazed with shining eyes upon a spectacle which sent the blood leaping through his veins—a herd of twenty buffaloes pouring out of the path, crowding and jostling one another as they streamed down the mountainside through the woods, following a deer trail which crossed the buffalo road almost at right angles. Twice the young warrior bent his bow and drew the shaft to the head, and twice he lowered his weapon, unwilling to kill game which he must leave to the wolves.

Afternoon came and still the Raven rode on through the teeming mountain forest, following the deep-worn highway which the migrating herds through unknown centuries had carved across the Overhills. More keenly than ever now his eyes searched the path ahead. The wild stallion and his mares had probably grazed abundantly in Long Meadow before their early morning rest had been interrupted; but by this time they should be hungry again, for since leaving Long Meadow they had not stopped to feed. Wherever the Raven saw the forest open a little ahead of him so that grass grew under the far-spaced trees, he halted and listened carefully. Before long in one of those grassy places he should find the three wild horses grazing, and he wished to avoid frightening them.

The path, which heretofore had wound around the mountain shoulders, dipped suddenly into a deep, gorgelike valley at the bottom of which a torrent roared. The forest here was close and dark. The wild horses would not halt in this valley, for there was no grass to be had; and for a time the Raven relaxed his

vigilance, letting his eyes stray from the path ahead.

From a tall hemlock on the mountainside a wild gobbler took wing, sailing obliquely across the valley, and the Raven saw an eagle, which had been perching on a dead tulip poplar, launch himself forward in swift pursuit. The young brave turned on his horse's back, gazing upward over his shoulder, eagerly watching the chase.

Without warning, Manito-Kinibic reared, swerved to the right, and plunged forward. His rider, taken utterly by surprise, lurched perilously, yet somehow kept his seat. For an instant, as Manito-Kinibic reared again, the Raven saw a sinewy naked arm raised above a hideous grinning face daubed with vermilion and black. Steel-fingered hands clutched the Raven's leg; on the other side another hand clawed at his thigh. Out from the thicket into the path ahead leaped three more warriors, feathered and plumed with eagle tails and hawk wings, striped and mottled with the red and black paint of war. More dreadful than the hunting cry of the puma, the shrill war whoop of the Muskogees split the air.

But for Manito-Kinibic the Rattlesnake the chase of the chestnut stallion would have ended then. But the Muskogee war party which waylaid Corane the Raven in the pass, hoping to take him alive for slavery or the torture, failed to reckon with the temper and strength of the mighty roan.

In an instant Manito-Kinibic had become a rearing, snorting fury, a raging devil of battering hoofs and gleaming teeth. The Raven saw one Muskogee go

down before the plunging roan stallion. He saw another whose shoulder was red with something that was not war paint. He saw the three warriors in the path ahead leap for their lives into the thicket as Manito-Kinibic charged down upon them. Bending low on his horse's neck, he heard an arrow speed over him and, a half second later, another arrow. Then, remembering that he was the son of a war captain, he rose erect, looked back, and flourishing the hand which still held his bow and spear, hurled at his enemies the Cherokee whoop of triumph.

Thenceforward for a time the Raven watched the path behind him rather than the path ahead. The war parties of the Muskogees were often mounted, and the young Cherokee thought it likely that this party had horses concealed in the thickets near the path. They would probably pursue him, but with Manito-Kinibic under him he was safe. Yet for a while he gave the sure-footed roan his head, racing onward as swiftly as the uneven surface of the trail allowed. So it happened that he was driven by necessity into doing the thing which he had intended to avoid.

A mile beyond the scene of the ambush the valley widened. Here, encircled by forested heights, lay a level, sun-bathed meadow, sweet with clover and wild-pea vine. Northwind and his mares had traveled far and fast. Urged on by his restless eagerness to get out of the dark, forbidding mountains—perhaps impelled too, by some mysterious premonition of danger—the chestnut horse had permitted no halt for food.

In this beautiful vivid green oasis in the wilderness of woods he halted at last.

The meadow was dotted with grazing deer. Clearly no enemy lurked there. With a joyful whinny Northwind turned aside from the path and led his consorts to the feast.

A half hour later, an instant before the wariest of the whitetails had caught the warning sound, the wild stallion raised his head suddenly, listened intently for a moment, then, with a peremptory summons to the mares, trotted slowly with high head and tail toward the lower end of the meadow. Because wild creatures do not ordinarily rush headlong through the forest, he miscalculated the speed of the intruder whose hoof-beats he had heard. He was still near the middle of the meadow, while the mares, loath to leave the clover beds, were far behind him, when he saw the Raven on Manito-Kinibic dash out of the woods.

The young brave heard the wild stallion's snort of surprise, saw him leap forward and race for the Buffalo path, while the mares wheeled and galloped off to the left. In long, beautiful bounds the stallion skimmed over the grass to the meadow's lower end where the path reëntered the forest.

The damage having been done, the Raven let Manito-Kinibic do his best for two or three miles. But the wild horse ran like the north wind which blows across the summit of Unaka Kanoos. It was then that the Raven named him, in honor of that north wind which is the swiftest and keenest of all the winds of

the mountains. Until his rider checked him, Manito-Kinibic ran a good race. But they saw the stallion no more that day.

Even among the Cherokees, great hunters and marvelously skillful trackers, it was considered a noteworthy thing that Corane the Raven and Manito-Kinibic the Rattlesnake were able to follow the trail of the chestnut stallion all the way from the eastern slope of the Overhills to the low country of the Atlantic coast, more than two hundred miles as the white man reckons distance. In one respect fortune favored the young warrior. Except for the Muskogee ambush in the mountain pass, he suffered no interference at the hands of man and indeed saw scarcely a human face between the Overhills and the coast. Even when he had reached the white men's country—where, however, the settlements were still small and sparse—the wild horse's fear of human enemies kept both himself and his pursuers out of man's way. The spot where the long chase had its ending was as lonely as the remotest wilderness.

To Northwind, after this long journey, that spot seemed a paradise. To Corane the Raven, viewing it cautiously from the cover of the woods about noon of a warm, cloudless June day, it seemed to combine all the conditions essential for his success. A dry, level meadow, carpeted with short, thick grass and shaped like a broad spearhead, lay between a converging river and a creek which came together at the meadow's lower end. There, and for some distance along the shore, the land sloped sharply to the river,

forming a little bluff about ten feet in height, while beyond the river lay vast marshes stretching for miles toward the hazy line of woods on the barrier isles.

The Raven took in these things at a glance; noted, too, with satisfaction, that here and there in the meadow stood clumps of some dense, stiff-branched bush of a kind unknown in the mountains. Then, well pleased, his plan complete to the smallest detail, he let his eyes rest again upon that feature of the scene which was the most important and most gratifying of all.

Almost in the center of the meadow stood Northwind, the wild stallion, alert, arrogant, confident, a picture of lithe, clean-cut beauty and perfectly proportioned strength. But he no longer stood alone. Just beyond him grazed five mares, all of them bays and all of them of one size and build. The Raven knew at once that they were not wild horses, and he surmised that they were strays from the white men's stock. But it mattered little whence they had come. The essential fact was that Northwind had taken them as his own, had become their master and protector.

Two hours before midnight, when the moon, almost at the full, swung high above the marshes beyond the river and the grassy expanse of the meadow was bathed in ghostly light, the Raven led Manito-Kinibic from his hiding place in the woods to the edge of the open. There the young brave halted. The big roan, his nostrils tingling with a scent which set his blood on fire, needed no word of instruction. He knew his part and would play it perfectly. Quivering with eagerness, yet too well trained to give way to the fury that pos-

sessed him, Manito-Kinibic moved out into the meadow at a slow walk, his hoofs making no sound.

The Raven waited until the roan had become a dim, uncertain shape in the moonlight. Then, crouching low, the Indian stole to the nearest bush clump, thence to another isolated thicket, and thence by a roundabout course to a third. He was halfway down the meadow when he heard the wild stallion's challenge and knew that Manito-Kinibic's keen nose had led the roan straight to his goal. Bending close to the ground, sometimes creeping on all fours, sometimes crawling like a snake, the Raven moved from bush clump to bush clump toward the sound.

A fresh breeze blew from the sea across the marshes. The wild stallion, resting with his mares near the meadow's lower end where creek and river joined, could neither smell nor hear an enemy approaching from the direction of the woods. Manito-Kinibic was scarcely fifty paces distant when Northwind saw him.

A moment the wild horse stood at gaze, his muscles tense for the long leap which would launch him forward in swift flight. Then fear passed out of him and fury took its place. A glance had shown him what the intruder was—a lone stallion, riderless, unaccompanied by man, roaming at will and evidently seeking the bay mares. Loud and shrill rang Northwind's challenge. Instantly he charged his foe.

Manito-Kinibic the rattlesnake was a veteran of many battles. The fiercest battle of his career was the one which he fought that night in the moonlit meadow where the long chase of the chestnut stallion had its

end. Northwind too had conquered many rivals to make good his mastery of the wild horse herds, but never before had he faced an antagonist as formidable as the burly roan. With Manito-Kinibic lay the advantage of size and weight; with the wild horse the advantage of quickness and agility. In courage neither surpassed the other. In cunning each was the other's match.

Almost at once they took each other's measure and, despite their fury, fought with instinctive skill, each striving to utilize to the utmost those powers in which he excelled. After his first whirlwind charge, Northwind did not charge again. He knew, after that first onset, that he must not hurl himself recklessly against the roan's weight and bulk. This was an enemy too big to be overwhelmed; he must be cut to pieces with slashing hoofs and torn to ribbons with ripping, raking teeth. Hence the wild stallion whirled and circled, feinted and reared, dashed in and leaped clear again, like a skillful rapierman whose opponent wields a broadsword—and wields it well.

For Manito-Kinibic was no blundering bruiser whose sole reliance was his strength. He, too, fought with cunning and skill, maneuvering with a lightness which belied his bulk, parrying and thrusting with an adroitness not much inferior to that of his opponent. But, apparently realizing the advantage which his weight gave him, he strove from the first for close quarters. Furiously, incessantly he forced the fighting, seeking to grip and hold his elusive enemy rearing high to crush the wild horse with his battering hoofs, plunging for-

ward with all his weight to drive his mighty shoulder against his foe and hurl him to the ground.

It was a fight too furious to last long. 'A' stallion's hoofs and teeth are fearful weapons. A few minutes more must have brought a bloody end to the battle, though no man can say what that end would have been. Suddenly from a bush clump a shadow darted, sped lightly across the grass, and vanished in a tuft of tall weeds. Northwind did not see it because it was behind him. If Manito-Kinibic saw it, he gave no sign.

The battling stallions wheeled and reared, biting and plunging, striking with their forefeet, thrusting, parrying, feinting. Once more the roan hurled himself forward, his small eyes gleaming red, his teeth bared, his heavy hoofs stabbing the air; and once more his slim, long-maned opponent, light as a dancer, lithe as a panther, whirled aside, escaping destruction by an inch.

Again as they fenced for an opening, rearing high, snorting and squealing, the wild horse's back was turned to the tuft of weeds; and again the shadow darted forward, swiftly, noiselessly, gliding over the turf.

Next moment Corane the Raven crouched close behind the chestnut stallion. A half second more, and he had swung his rawhide thong with the skill for which he was famous. Then, with a shout, he leaped for Manito-Kinibic's head.

Northwind was down. He lay on his side, motionless as a dead thing. The rawhide thong, weighted at its ends, was wrapped around his hind legs, binding them tightly together. The greatest miracle was not the

skill with which the Raven had thrown his snare. More wonderful still was the quelling of Manito-Kinibic's battle fury, the swiftness with which his master brought the raging roan under control. Yet this was merely the result of teaching, of long, painstaking instruction.

Manito-Kinibic, his neck and shoulders bloody, his flanks heaving, stood quietly, gazing down at his fallen foe with eyes in which the fire of hatred still glowed; but Northwind, his silky sides streaked with red, lay inert, inanimate, seeming scarcely to breathe. He offered no resistance as the Raven, with deft fingers, slipped a strong hobble around the slim forelegs and made it fast above each fetlock. There was no terror, no fierceness in the wild horse's large eyes. Instead they seemed singularly calm and soft, as though the brain behind them were lulled with a vision of places far away and days long ago.

Yet, if the chestnut stallion, a prisoner at last, dreamed of some green daisy-sprinkled forest prairie beyond the mountains, the dream passed quickly. Presently the Raven removed the thong which had held Northwind's hind legs helpless; and instantly the wild horse came to life, panic-stricken, furious, frantic for his freedom.

For a moment he thought himself free. His hind legs were no longer bound. The hobble around his forelegs bound them only loosely. With a snort he heaved upward and leaped away in mad flight—only to pitch headlong to the ground with a force which almost drove the breath from his body. Up he scrambled once more and down again he plunged as his fettered

forelegs crumpled under him. Five times he rose and five times he fell before he seemed to realize his impotence.

For several minutes then he lay utterly still. The Raven had remounted Manito-Kinibic. The wild horse could not escape; yet it was well to be prepared for whatever might happen. The ordeal might be over in an hour, or, on the other hand, many hours might pass before Northwind's spirit was broken.

At last he struggled to his feet. The Raven circled him on the roan, watching him keenly. The captive's frenzy seemed to have passed. He was cooler now, steadier on his legs. Sudden anxiety which was almost panic gripped the young Indian. He recalled that once he had seen a hobbled wild horse travel a distance of half a bowshot in short labored bounds before falling; and in a flash he had become aware of a danger hitherto unrealized.

Quickly he slipped from Manito-Kinibic's back and approached Northwind from behind, uncoiling the weighted rawhide thong which he had removed from the wild stallion's hind legs. He would snare those hind legs again and thus make certain of his captive.

By a margin of moments he was too late. Northwind wheeled, bounded forward, and this time he did not fall. He had learned what not one hobbled wild horse in a thousand ever discovered—that while a leap of normal length would throw him every time, he could travel at least a little distance at fair speed if his leaps were very short.

Another bound he made, another and another—stiff-

legged, labored, heart-breaking—keeping his balance by a miracle. He was more than halfway to the river's edge when the hobble threw him, and though he fell heavily, almost in an instant he was on his feet again, bounding onward as before.

On the very verge of the low bluff, the Raven, who had remounted as quickly as possible, drove Manito-Kinibic against the chestnut's flank in a last attempt to turn or throw him. Reeling from the blow, Northwind staggered on the brink. Then, rallying his strength for a supreme effort, he plunged sidewise down the steep slope, and the water closed over him.

Some say he was drowned. The Raven never saw him again, though the moon shone brightly on the river. But the water is very deep beside that bluff, and there the ebb tide is very strong and swift. It might have borne him quickly beyond the Indian's vision; and since the hobble allowed his forelegs some freedom of action, he might have made shift to swim.

At any rate, when Dunmore, the trader, told the story of the chestnut stallion that night in Nick Rounder's tavern, an old seafaring man who was present pricked up his ears and asked the trader certain questions. Then, with a great show of wonder and a string of sailor's oaths, he spun a queer yarn.

One midnight, he said, while his ship lay at anchor in a river mouth between two barren islands, the lookout sighted a big chestnut horse coming down the river with the tide. They manned a boat, got a rope over the horse's head, and towed him to the sandy island shore. He seemed almost exhausted, his neck and

shoulders were cut and bruised, and how he had come into the river was a mystery, since his forelegs were hobbled. They could not take the horse aboard their vessel; so, after cutting the hobble, they left him lying on the beach, apparently more dead than alive. They expected to see his body there in the morning, but when they weighed anchor at sunrise he was gone.

Dunmore believed the old man's story. At any rate, it fits in with an old legend handed on to-day in the barrier islands of the Carolina coast.

The story runs that the slim, wiry ponies of those islands, rovers of the beaches and marsh flats, have in them the blood of De Soto's Andalusian horses abandoned nearly four centuries ago in the Mississippi wilderness, six hundred miles away, beyond the mountains. However that may be, the river in which Northwind made his last desperate bid for freedom passes quickly to the sea between two of these barrier isles.

HOT BLOOD AND COLD

BY

JONATHAN BROOKS

FEW writers have an acquaintance with the racing game like that enjoyed by John Calvin Mellett. Of contemporary writers on the sport he is the best known, stories signed "Jonathan Brooks" having made his pseudonym familiar to track enthusiasts from Latonia to Tia Juana.

HOT BLOOD AND COLD ¹

OLD Tompkins turned off the National Road, about six miles east of town, and drove south along a range-line road for a mile to a big comfortable country home set back in a clump of pine trees. He did not turn in at the drive, but hitched to the fence and walked up to the house. His shoulders sagged and his grizzled head hung down, the while his old knees shuffled unwilling feet along on a most reluctant errand. In his hand he carried a bundle of miscellaneous papers, some of which bore seals and other marks of legal dignity. In his heart was a heavy feeling.

Tompkins, as executor of the estate of his best friend, James John Taylor, was on his way to tell the widow Wilma Taylor the state of her affairs. It was a sad story that he was forced to tell, for James John had been a better horseman than business executive, and had left his widow nothing but the house over her head and a few horses in her barn. Business obligations, two or three old notes at the bank, and a lack of system in management had whittled down James John's estate to a very slender living. Todd, cagy Hoosier, had done his best to make a good showing, but after he had reached a balance with liabilities, which was difficult, he had found it impossible to rake or scrape any substantial assets out of the débris. His

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step, as he crossed the yard, foretold the bad news he bore.

When old Tompkins drove back to town that afternoon in the cool early spring, he led a wild bay colt behind his cart. He took this colt to his stable at the old kite-shaped track and lodged him there with his own trotters and pacers. The next day he returned to the Taylor place, bringing two men, each of whom purchased one of the other two trotters James John had left. On the too meager proceeds of these sales the widow Wilma was to live until the summer races, when Todd should win some purses with the colt he had selected as the likeliest of the three.

Running Water was the name of the bay colt, and the name was the key to all the trouble that old Tompkins Todd suffered through a summer's campaign. Running Water was a son of Water Mark and Minnehaha. Water Mark was by Mark Time, he by Bismarck which traced back by devious ways to Rysdyk's Hambletonian. This side of Running Water's house was orthodoxy crystallized, but Minnehaha was no credit to the colt. She was an Indian mare, brought east from Oklahoma by a band of gypsies and left with an Indiana farmer boy who preferred her natural trotting speed to the prosaic plow horse that brought scorn upon him every time he ventured forth to call on a Sunday afternoon. She could trot a flighty gait, and she won several county-fair races before she was mated with Water Mark at the big farm south of town.

Running Water, too, could trot, and would trot like wildfire whenever he could think of nothing more in-

teresting to himself or tantalizing to Todd. Old Tompkins, veteran of a score of years and master of a hundred willful horses, was amazed by turns at the colt's downright speed and pure devilish spirit. Running Water was absolutely sound as to wind, limb, teeth, and heart. His toes were tough, and there was not, in fact, any tender spot upon him. Yet, in the midst of a wonderful burst of trotting speed, the colt frequently would break into a wild, crazy gallop. Todd at first, suspecting some physical weakness or discomfort, had Running Water examined thoroughly by a veterinary after each running spell. Each time he was assured the colt was sound as a dollar.

Old Tompkins settled down to the trying but fascinating task of puzzling the colt out, as he called it. He intended to find the answer to Running Water if it took him all summer. In mid-June he had developed Running Water to the point where the colt could trot a half mile in less than half a dozen seconds more than a minute, but he had not succeeded in breaking the habit of running the next half mile. He tried whipping the colt and forcing him to run a mile, two miles, and even three. He tried coaxing, and he tried pulling down slowly from each break. He whipsawed the colt until his arms were tired. He used blind bridles and open bridles, single bits and double bits and chain bits. He even, in his extremity, experimented with a fool set of trotting hobbles, suggested by an Ohio horseman. All the time he worked to gain the confidence of the wild Running Water.

The first week in July he had Running Water trot-

ting two miles out of every three, on the average, without a break, and began to have some hopes. The second week in July, with the widow Wilma Taylor and his daughter Judie sitting in the grand stand, he started Running Water in the 2.24 trot at the Terre Haute midsummer meeting. Running Water trotted away from the field as if it were tied, set a hot clip to the half-mile post, and then ran away. The second heat he broke, refused to trot, and was distanced.

"Don't you be discouraged," old Tompkins told the widow Wilma. "This colt can trot. What's more, he's going to trot, or I'll know the reason why. I'm going to ship him along with my stable to Deetroit."

"But won't that cost a great deal of money?" she asked doubtfully.

"You needn't worry about that for a minute. Once I get him strung out he'll pay back the few dollars he costs us."

Todd shipped to Detroit and took the colt along, but there, with all the élite of the harness-horse world looking on, Running Water utterly disgraced the horsemanship of old Tompkins. Starting in the 2.20 class, the colt showed tremendous whiz for the first three-quarters of each mile, only to break and run the rest of the way. The judges placed him fourth in the field of four, and Todd saved his entrance money. Grand Circuit veterans lifted their eyebrows and wagged questioning heads at the spectacle of old Tompkins driving a consistent runner. He had been known for a decade as a careful trainer whose horses stuck to their trotting or pacing like a shoemaker to his last.

At North Randall, a week later, the old-timers smiled broadly as Running Water went through much the same performance. By the time they reached Buffalo and camped for a week's racing at Fort Erie, Todd's friends were ragging him openly about his running horse. When Running Water had had his usual gallop among the trotters at Fort Erie, old Tompkins was sorely put. He had begun to doubt the colt and his own ability to mold the youngster into a trotting machine. His perplexity was multiplied by his knowledge that, back home, the widow must be hard pressed for funds. After the Detroit meeting he had forwarded a small check, explaining that it represented fourth money. Leaving Cleveland after the North Randall races, he felt unequal to the task of writing. Now, at Fort Erie, he did not know what to do.

The old fellow brushed aside the raillery of his friends, and took counsel, not of the colt's prospects, but of his own duty to the memory of James John Taylor. That evening, after the colt had further disgraced him, he went in to Buffalo and bought a money order for a moderate sum of money. This he mailed to the widow Taylor with an utterly dissembling letter.

"I am glad to advise you," he wrote, painfully, "that our colt has at last win a race. He win nice to-day, and I am inclosing a money order."

Then began a period of outright torture. Tompkins Todd redoubled his efforts with the colt, starting him in another race later in the week at Fort Erie. The next week at Syracuse he started Running Water in two races, but again the colt displayed a lot of foot

only to break and run at the critical moment. Todd deserted the Grand Circuit and took his stable back west, stopping at Youngstown for one week and Akron for another. He sent another small check from Youngstown, and set forth hopes of better things at the two weeks' meeting in Columbus.

At Akron, Tompkins and his horses were quartered next to Billy Loyd, a one-horse guy from Kentucky and old-time friend of the Hoosier horseman.

"Tomp," Loyd hailed him one day, "how is that runnin' hoss yo' had at Terr' Hut?"

Old Tompkins shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not coddin', Old-Timer," Loyd pursued. "I'm wonderin' about that young hoss. I watched him out theah on th' track this aftuhnoon. I wonduh if yo' evuh happened to think mebbe yo' really have got a runnin' hoss, theah, instead of a trottuh?"

"I don't know about that," Todd replied. "But, Loyd, I do know this: If he ain't a runner, he's the runninest trotter that the Lord ever let live."

"Did it evuh strike yo'," asked Loyd, "that them long hind laigs and them narrow shoulduhs might mean 'run' instead o' 'trot'?"

"As soon have a snake in my stable as a runner," Todd declared emphatically. "I've not spent my whole life with trotters and pacers to fool around now with any bangtails. Not for a minute."

The mere thought of runners was abhorrent. Your true trotting horseman has only contempt for the bangtails, just as your lover of thoroughbreds looks upon trotting and pacing as sport for agriculturists. Hot

blood is hot blood, and cold blood is cold. Thoroughbreds and trotters do not mix, nor do the men that breed, train, race, and love them. Now and then, in the past, trotting horsemen have ventured into the running-horse game, but almost invariably they have gone back to their first love, poorer but wiser for the experience. By the same token, the man who deserts the bangtails for the harness horses usually retires from the field without profit or honor. An age of rivalry between the two, sharpened by jealousy and prejudice, has produced in each group a somewhat bitter contempt for the other.

"My idea was," said Loyd, "that you must be spendin' some money to tote this hoss around the country. Yo' know I wouldn't nib in, just to heah my haid rattle. But listen, Old-Timer, I've seen a powe'ful lot of runnuhs in my time in Kaintuck, and this colt looks mo' like a runnuh than a trottuhs to me."

"And acts the same way," Todd commented dryly.

"Why not sell the fool colt?"

Old Tompkins looked steadily at Loyd for a full minute before he replied:

"Loyd, I wouldn't tell another soul in the world about this thing, and I wouldn't have you breathe it out loud anywhere. But the fact is, I cannot sell the colt. Or even send him home. I've simply got to race him and win some money with him."

"Well," replied Loyd thoughtfully, carefully minding his own business as to the story back of the colt, "I was only thinkin' yo' could mo' likely win with him against th' runnuhs than against th' trottuhs. If he

ain't a runnuh, I was bawn yestuhday." He paused, and then half turned as if to go about his business, when Todd interrupted him.

"How fast," he asked, shame-faced, "should one of these runners travel?"

"A good hoss ought to do a mile in bettuh than 1.44," Loyd answered.

"Seems to me I've rode that fast with him hitched to my bike," said old Tompkins. "With a boy on his back—Loyd, you know I think I might try him out. I ain't saying I will, but I might. Hamlin's boy, young Dewey, is traveling around with us, and he can ride."

This concession cost old Tompkins a tremendous mental struggle. He knew he was turning his back on the old path and venturing into strange, suspicious roads. He had known any number of horsemen who tried the same experiment to their sorrow, and, with others of his kind, he had jeered at them for their weakness. On the other hand, the old fellow was in sore straits with regard to the colt and his duty to the widow Taylor.

The two old friends walked off then towards Todd's stable, old Tompkins taking Loyd by the arm and leaning on him for moral support as they conspired.

The next morning, between daybreak and five o'clock, when the dew was heavy on the dusty grass and horses were thrusting their noses through stable doors to sniff the early air, old Tompkins, Loyd, and Hamlin Wright might have been found leaning over the fence of the half-mile track. Todd and Loyd held stop watches and kept silent. Old Hamlin, eager for

his boy, "Doo" Wright, to behave with credit, was adjuring the lad to gallop Running Water's head off.

"Now, Doo," called old Hamlin, "git a holt of that colt's head with one hand an' lam with th' othuh. He's out heah to run, boy, an' don't yo' fo'git it. Show us sumpin'."

Doo Wright dug his heels into Running Water's ribs, and the startled colt jumped into full gallop. The boy took him twice around the track before he pulled in. Loyd and Todd looked first at their watches, then at each other, and nodded their gray old heads.

This performance was repeated the next morning, and the next, the only difference being that Running Water ran a little faster each succeeding morning, and Todd and Loyd wagged their heads more emphatically. Loyd was enthusiastic, and Todd began to be reconciled to the project. They shipped to Columbus Friday night, and on the next Monday morning they were out again at daybreak to try Running Water on the mile track. The colt was, as Loyd said, "a regulah runnin' fool." Todd had entered the colt in two trotting races during the Grand Circuit fortnight at Columbus, one in the first week and in the second week of the meeting. He started both times, and the old story was repeated on each occasion. After the usual defeat, the second week, old Tompkins journeyed into Columbus and sent a money order to the widow of James John, with a letter to the effect that the colt was coming along splendidly and had just finished second in a good race. He told her he was shipping to Louisville for a few days,

and would be in Lexington after that for two weeks.

His letter was mailed Wednesday night. When he returned to the track, Todd found Loyd waiting for him. The Kentuckian had found a copy of a Louisville paper carrying gossip of a running meet in progress at Churchill Downs. He had been reading a story regarding an overnight race at one mile, scheduled for the coming Saturday.

"Old-Timer," Loyd declared, "here's what you do: You ship on to Loo'vi with that theah colt, and take old Hamlin and Doo with yo'. Leave th' rest of yo' hosses with me, and I'll ship them on to Lexin't'n with my trottuh. That will save freight and yo' can travel light. I'll be at Lexn't'n when you get theah, and yo' can have yo' Saturday at the Downs to try out Runnin' Watuh."

Old Tompkins, facing the actual test, quailed under it. He recoiled from Loyd's enthusiasm, for he felt he could not bear the trials of a neophyte tackling a strange game in a strange, hard land.

Of the preliminaries to the race at Churchill Downs on that Saturday afternoon little need be said. A due sense of delicacy prevents a detailed relation of Todd's blunders in dealing with the track stewards in such matters as posting his entrance money and identifying his horse. In the first place although old Tompkins did not know it, the race was a selling race, the rules of which permit losers to bid upon and buy the winning horse. If there is more than one claim at a minimum price set by rule, competitors bid until one of them remains. Naturally, the best horses are not

entered in such races, for no owner takes a chance on giving up good horseflesh for a song. By the time the race was called the news had spread throughout the grounds that there was an outlander from the harness world with a cold-blooded horse come to measure strides with Kentucky's thoroughbreds. Derision greeted the old Hoosier in the paddock, and he flushed painfully under the tan of many summers. He held his peace, and found a place on the rail as old Hamlin led the colt, with little Doo in the saddle, out upon the track. The old fellow felt peculiarly helpless at the prospect of watching a horse that was in his charge race with no grip of his own upon the reins.

Starting to-day, in this race at one mile, were five thoroughbreds of better than average quality among selling platers. A horse named Solid Silver, owned by one Sim Wilkins of Lexington, was the favorite. Odds varied on the others, but Running Water was at the foot of the list, the long shot of the field. He was rated at twenty-five to one. Two dollars wagered through the mutuel machines would bring, in case Running Water should win, fifty dollars in return.

Now, there are days at Churchill Downs when the jockey club admits colored folk and poor people to the infield, free of charge, to watch the racing. This was such a gala day, and the infield, thronged with darkies, looked like a pan of ginger snaps. Your darky likes a long shot, and he likes, moreover, to bet on any horse ridden by one of his race. It had been noised about since noon that Doo Wright was to ride Running Water, and the result was that when little

Doo came bobbing into view on the back of Running Water a thousand lusty-lunged and leather-throated supporters were hanging over the inner rail, yelling encouragement and miscellaneous advice to him. Every one of them held a two-dollar mutuel ticket.

"Mistah Stahtuh," said old Hamlin to the boss at the barrier, "ouah colt ain't much used to these barriuh, suh, an' we'd like to kinda hold back on th' outside."

"Take him back half a mile if you like, nigguh," said the starter gruffly. "Only, tell that little black jock he'd better start standing. If I catch him trying a running break through this barrier as she goes up, I'll wring his dirty neck."

"Yessuh, yessuh," agreed old Hamlin. "Thass right, suh, thass right." He backed nervously away.

"Doo, stand back heah, outside, quiet, till that theah barriuh goes up," he admonished. "When she goes, get away quick. And lam time outa th' colt till he runs his haid off."

Doo did not answer because every muscle from the roots of his kinky hair to the toes of his feet was straining to help him hold his seat upon the shoulders of Running Water. He had other things to think about than his father's advice, for Running Water, for some unknown reason, was suddenly a torrent of temper. The colt reared and plunged, backed and sidestepped. His one last fling took the form of a half spin on his hind feet that left him, when he came down from the air, facing the wrong way of the track. At the precise instant he planted four defiant feet in

the loam, the barrier flew up and five other horses, better mannered and better trained, jumped off for their mile journey.

Todd's heart sank. Old Hamlin screamed with helpless rage: "Git away with 'im, Doo."

"Kill that dog!" screamed a yellow nigger on the rail.

"Staht a fire unduh him!" called another angry bettor.

The boy kicked at the colt's ribs, and jerked at his head to turn him. Then rose a wild whoop from a thousand darky throats in the infield, with a thousand fists shaking across the rail at the maddened Running Water. The colt rose and swung right about under the boy's one hand, and jumped in pain as Doo, with the other hand, cut viciously under his ribs with a pointed whip. As Running Water came down on his toes, the threatening roars from the outraged darkies assailed his ears. Perhaps with a hereditary memory of reckless Indian war cries ringing through his brain, Running Water plunged along the track in pursuit of the flying five, with little Doo Wright clinging to his mane in sheer terror.

A thousand negro voices urged them on their way. When Running Water flattened out to run, the field, in a bunch, was twelve long lengths in front, running smoothly like the thoroughbreds they were. They were out of sight around the first turn before Running Water had fled past the stands. Turning into the back stretch, Solid Silver had opened up a substantial lead and was gaining on the four that had started with him.

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Back in the dust Running Water was eating up the distance between him and the four. Rounding the far turn, with Doo hanging on by fingers, toes, and teeth, Running Water caught up with the last of the four and swung outside for third place. On the turn itself he outran the bunch, and, coming into the stretch for the wire, had only Solid Silver to beat. The jock on Solid Silver was sitting tight, for he had five good lengths' advantage and home was only an eighth of a mile away. Running Water came boiling on.

Old Tompkins took courage for a forlorn hope. Hamlin Wright stood wringing his wrinkled black hands. They saw Running Water was gaining as he headed into the straightway. When the darkies on the infield glimpsed the long-leaping colt tearing over the track, another such bedlam arose as had sent Running Water away. They shrieked and howled and whooped for their long shot and for little Doo Wright. The jock on Solid Silver woke up at the riot and glanced hurriedly over his right shoulder to see what was happening. As Running Water raced into view in the corner of his eye, he jumped on Solid Silver, dingdong, with hand and fist. He shook up the thoroughbred and startled him into a quick, short-jumping dash for the wire. Too late!

Running Water was nose and nose with Solid Silver, fifteen lengths from home, and was trading jump for jump, stride for stride. Ten lengths from the wire Running Water's head flung out in front, his long legs throwing him over the ground furiously. Five lengths, and he was half a length in front. At the wire clear

daylight showed between him and Solid Silver. Little Doo Wright, opening his scared eyes, found he had won his race. Running Water, still trembling with fright, plunged and jumped a half mile further before little Doo, sawing and jerking manfully, could pull him down to earth. He trotted back to the stands, tired as a dog and glad his running was done. The cold-blooded colt's race, run in 1.40, had been a credit to any thoroughbred.

The outcry that had risen when Running Water was left at the post was a murmur to the uproar from the infield when the colt went under the wire a winner over Solid Silver.

Little Doo, who had bought two mutuel tickets with winnings from a session at craps, was jubilant. Old Hamlin Wright, as always intensely loyal to Tompkins, fairly wept and bubbled over with joy. Todd, still standing at the rail as Doo brought the colt back to the paddock, was at once glad and sick at heart. His winnings were small, for the purse was meager and he had wagered nothing on the race. The old fellow started dejectedly for the paddock.

"Mistuh Todd—are you Mistuh Todd?" demanded a stout, rat-eyed man with a red face as Tompkins approached the ring. He was a big fellow, and he planted himself in Todd's path as he accosted old Tompkins. Todd looked up, dumbly, and nodded.

"My name's Wilkins," volunteered the red-faced man, "Sim Wilkins. Glad to meet yo', suh." He proffered a fat paw, and placed his left hand chummily on Todd's shoulder. "That hoss out theah, that

Solid Silver, which yo' colt beat, is my hoss. I'm claimin' yo' colt, suh."

Todd gasped. Here was something new.

"Claiming him?"

"Yes, suh, I'm buyin' yo' colt."

"But he's not for sale," Todd replied, all at sea.

"Not fo' sale, suh? Why, my deah suh, this is a sellin' race," declared Wilkins. "Yo' colt suhtainly is fo' sale, and I'm claimin' him at six hundred and fawty dolluhs, the price put upon him by the conditions of the race, suh."

At this point old Hamlin crept into Todd's view. He had heard a little of the red-faced Wilkin's talk, and knew what was going on. He plucked at the sleeve of old Tompkins and whispered in his ear, the while Wilkins looked on suspiciously.

"Scuse me, suh, bet mought I tell y'all sumpin?" he asked.

"You'll excuse me a moment, won't you?" Todd asked Wilkins.

Wilkins nodded warily, and stood over the old pair as if he would hear every word of their conversation. Hamlin, however, thwarted him by whispering behind his hand into Todd's ear:

"Doo say this colt is crazy. He didn't jus' run, he ran *away*. Plain bolted, 'n' Doo couldn't do anything with 'im. Bettuh sell 'im, suh."

Todd turned to look old Hamlin in the eye for a second, and then, slowly forming his judgment and sensing some relief at the disposal of the colt, faced about to agree to Wilkin's dictum.

"Yes, sir," he said, "you're right. I was—ah—I was a little upset by some other matters, Mr. Wilkins. It's all right. You said six hundred and forty dollars."

"Yes, suh, and I have the money with me, suh."

Wilkins made haste to close the deal, counting over the money in tens and twenties while old Tompkins stood still somewhat dazed. Unwonted events were passing too swiftly before his eyes. The money in hand, he thanked the rat-eyed Wilkins, and stood blankly with Hamlin, to watch the big fellow thrust his way to the paddock, notify the officials and take the still blowing Running Water away beside Solid Silver. Todd did not know, and Wilkins had not told him, that, had he delayed, other horsemen in the same race would have bid up the price set by rule upon the winner.

Nothing more was said, and presently the three trailed off to the out-of-the-way stall in which Running Water had been quartered. That night they boarded a passenger train and traveled in this unaccustomed way to Lexington.

Todd did not write to the widow on Sunday, but spent a wretched day, at the old Lexington track, waiting for Billy Loyd to appear with his horses. The Kentuckian arrived late in the afternoon, and, after all the horses had been put up and quarters organized for the two weeks' stay, the two veterans sat down on a wooden trunk to take stock of their strategy. Loyd swore to be even with Wilkins, as one Kentuckian with another, but he did not tell Tompkins how the rat-eyed man had taken advantage of him. Todd, unable to

contain his misery longer, reviewed for old Loyd in short, broken sentences the whole story of his experience with Running Water from the time he had led the colt into town along the National Road until he had seen Wilkins lead it away. He told of the various checks and lying letters he had sent home.

"I suppose I'm an old fool," he said in conclusion "for having gone through this thing and muddled it up so. But what"—and he blew his nose more strenuously than seemed necessary—"what could I have done?"

There was no answer.

Monday morning brought no suggestion to Todd, and he was busy with a race that afternoon. Winning it with an old pacer, he took heart during the evening and made up his mind to write Wilma one more letter with one more small check, and delay the news of the sale until he should reach home. Tuesday morning he went into town to buy a money order, but he inquired at the general-delivery window first for any mail that might be awaiting him. There was a letter from Judie. He put it in his pocket, filled out his application, bought the money order, and inclosed it with his letter to Mrs. Taylor, mailing it on his way out of the post office. Out of the business district, and walking along a wide Lexington street, Tompkins fumbled for his glasses, found them, and opened Judie's letter to read it as he went. It was short:

DEAR POP: *This is just a note, because I haven't time to write more now. I thought I ought to tell you that Mrs. Taylor has started for Lexington to see*

you drive Running Water, and to surprise you. She says she has saved up some of the money you have sent her, and she wants to visit her cousin in Louisville, anyway. She thinks she will be in Lexington about Friday. She wants to surprise you, but I don't see why I should keep a secret from my dad. Besides, you might want to know in advance. As ever.

Old Tompkins went suddenly weak in the knees, and stopped to lean against a big elm tree for comfort. He took out a handkerchief, wiped his glasses, and reread the message from his daughter to make sure of its contents. Presently, in dogged desperation, he rose and went his way out to the track, resolved to let events take their course. It so happened that Running Water had been entered weeks before in a 2.20 trot for the three-year-olds, to be raced on the coming Friday.

"If I could only buy the fool colt back," he said to Loyd, meeting the Kentuckian near his stable, "I'd pay that man Wilkins a thousand dollars. Anything to have him here for that race Friday."

"She's sure goin' to be heah?"

"That's what the letter says. I can't head her off, and I'm durned if I know what I'll tell her when she comes."

Loyd suggested that they wire to Wilkins at Louisville, asking him to set a price on the colt, and the telegram was duly sent. That night the telegraph office notified Todd the message was not deliverable, Wilkins having left the Downs without giving a mailing

address. Old Tompkins resigned himself to await developments. His resignation brought some relief, so that he slept well and felt strong on Wednesday. But the day rolled slowly along under the Kentucky sun, and brought no new turn in affairs. By night his courage was oozing once more, and his philosophy was failing him.

Thursday morning Todd and Loyd were sitting in the shade in front of Todd's stable, wondering dully what could be done. Old Tompkins was worried half sick, and Loyd was really apprehensive for his friend. Neither had spoken for a quarter of an hour, when Loyd suddenly exclaimed:

"Theah he is! The fat rat!" He pointed excitedly out into the sunlight at a red-faced fat man, sweating along toward them. "That's yo' Mistuh Wilkins, Old-Timer! I'm suhtainly goin' to give that man a piece of my mind."

Todd sat up weakly and took notice as Wilkins bore down upon them in a rush of anger and indignation.

"Now, then," he almost shouted as he pointed an accusing finger at Todd, "what have yo' got to say fo' yo'self, suh? What have yo' got to say? Y'all sold me this heah Runnin' Watuh, didn't yo'? What yo' got to say, suh?" Near bursting with heat, Wilkins paused to mop the sweat from his fat red face. Todd was speechless. Old Hamlin Wright drifted out of a stall to hear the excitement.

"Yo' sold me this Runnin' Watuh fo' a thorough-bred, suh, and the colt's a damn half-breed. Cold-blooded colt, suh, and no runnuh at all. What have

yo' got to say? Why didn't yo' tell me he was cold-blooded?" Wilkins had worked himself into a terrible state.

"As I recollect it, you didn't ask me," replied Todd wanly, rising to the occasion and taking a good grip on his nerves.

"Didn't ask yo'?" Wilkins fairly shouted. "Why should I ask yo'? Yo' had him out theah runnin', didn't yo'? Then yo' sold him to me, didn't yo,' and took my good money?"

"Now, now, wait a minute," Loyd interposed. "From what I heah, Mistuh Wilkins, y'all took this colt away from Mistuh Todd. It wasn't a case of sellin' on his paht, but a case of grabbin' on yo' paht."

"Is that so?" demanded Wilkins. "Wheah do you get in on this?"

"Nevuh mind wheah I get in on it," Loyd replied. Old Hamlin edged nearer, with a pitchfork in his hand. He was mumbling angrily to himself.

"I've come out heah to get satisfaction, suh," declared Wilkins, belligerently. His tone softened somewhat, however, as he noted he was up against three men, one of whom had a pitchfork. A little crowd of track hangers-on had gathered around them.

"What do you mean by satisfaction?" asked Todd warily, wishing to grab the fat man by the hand and shake it for joy at the prospect of regaining the colt.

"Y'all got to take the damn colt off my hands," Wilkins asserted. "I have no use fo' a cold-blooded hoss."

"What would you say is a fair—" Tompkins began.

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"Wait a minute," interrupted Loyd. "What makes yo' think, Mistuh Wilkins, that we want this colt back?"

"Yo've *got* to take him back," Wilkins exploded.

"Oh, no, we haven't," said Loyd calmly. "He's yo' hoss. I know jockey-club rules myself, Mistuh Wilkins, if Mistuh Todd don't."

"I'll give him back at the claimin' price," said Wilkins. "I've no use fo' a cold-blood."

"Nope." Loyd was firm, and Todd relaxed, glad to watch his friend match wits for him.

"Five hundred." Wilkins here came off his high horse.

"Mistuh Wilkins, we'll give yo' just half what yo' paid fo' the colt—\$320," said Loyd with an air of finality.

"That's robbery," pleaded Wilkins.

Loyd shook his head and looked at Todd for affirmation. Todd wagged his gray head in agreement. Wilkins looked from one to the other of the old-timers, and then caved in completely.

"I'll take it," he said abjectly, and mopped his face with his handkerchief. "And good riddance of bad rubbish." Wilkins turned to look through the little knot of onlookers. Finding the boy he wanted, he issued a command: "Jim, go and get that dam Runnin' Watuh."

He drew a long breath while Todd, a heavy, heavy load off his heart, went into his office stall to bring out the money. It did not matter, old Tompkins reflected, how the colt behaved in the race on the morrow. The

main thing was to have him there ready to start before Wilma's eyes. While he fumbled in his effects, Sim Wilkins was addressing the crowd outside.

"Hot blood and cold," he said, "don't go togethuh. wheah one is meat and drink, the othuh is poison. And, I reckon, it's the othuh way about too. Nevuh no mo' cold-bloods fo' me. I stick to the wahm-blooded hosses frum now on."

Todd came out, counted over the bills to Wilkins and thanked him quietly. As Wilkins turned to depart, and Jim returned with the welcome Running Water to hand him over to old Hamlin, Loyd spoke up again:

"Now that it's all settled, Mistuh Wilkins, and yo' little experience is ended, what was the mattuh with Running Watuh?"

"Ah," the fat fellow growled, "he won't run a step. Dam fool insists on trottin'. Run his head off last Saturday, and now he wants to trot all the time."

He paused to see that old Tompkins was shaking hands with Billy Loyd, and then departed in deep disgust.

"The man is right," said Todd to Loyd. "Hot blood and cold don't mix. Never again for me."

The widow Taylor appeared the next afternoon before the 2.20 trot for three-year-olds, and seemed to be somewhat dazed at the warm welcome accorded her by the still hysterical Todd and his little retinue. Running Water, with all the gallop gone out of his system, won the \$2,000 purse in straight heats, trotting to a mark of 2.07 $\frac{1}{4}$ without so much as a skip. He

trotted as if he had never done anything else. Old Tompkins sat tight in his bike and gloated over the rivals who had poked fun at him throughout the summer. An hour after the race he sold the colt, to stay sold this time, to a millionaire from Memphis, who offered \$5,000 flat for him. The widow Wilma, visiting again at the stable after the race, wanted to hug old Tompkins. In fact, she did hug him.

"Tompkins, you're the best friend a woman ever had. James John always swore by you."

Todd flushed uncomfortably at her demonstration.

"You're so warm-hearted—a regular thoroughbred!" declared Wilma.

She wondered why he winced at her words.

THE BROWN OUTLAW

BY

VICTOR SHAW

PATIENTLY Victor Shawe is making his way to an enviable position as a sketcher of portraits of vigorous life. Colonel Hofer, publisher of *The Lariat*, has said of his "Brown Outlaw": "From the standpoint of humane society workers it is the best range-horse story that has been written."

THE BROWN OUTLAW¹

LINN COLBY rode clattering across the wooden bridge which in that day and year spanned the Ochoco near the lower end of Prineville's main street. Linn was out for a holiday—a horse hunt. There was an outlaw supposed to be running in the timber east of Grizzly Butte, and he wanted to prove, by riding the animal, that the stories he had heard regarding its temper and cunning were mostly bunk. But even the matter of the outlaw was remote from his thoughts as he rode singing into town, violating the quietude of the bright spring morning with his plaintive, tuneless rendition of *My Lulu Girl*. As he commenced the fifty-fourth verse he suddenly decided the words were hardly proper for the place or the occasion. Without change in tune or expression, he immediately switched to the *Cowboy's Lament*.

Lew Trask, sunning himself in front of Wigle's stable, got up and strolled out to the curb.

"Well, if it isn't Linn Colby!" he exclaimed as the rider stopped in front of the big red barn. "Linn, you poor sheepherder, I have it straight you've been asked to sing in a choir here. Yes—no?"

Linn glared at Lew for an instant; then nodded gravely.

"Yeh-ess," he drawled. "I'm going to sing *My Lulu*

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Girl next prayer-meeting night. I'm offering even money that I can sing all the verses I know without getting shot at."

"What makes you so reckless in your betting?" Lew asked. "Isn't it good manners any more to pack guns to prayer meeting?"

Colby dismounted, stretched his long arms, blinked his eyes and shook himself like a young animal that has rested too long in the same position.

"Kind of tedious, riding alone," he complained, speaking as if he intended to ignore the reflection on his singing. He lowered his arms and smothered a yawn with one hand. Then he made a sudden lunge and picked Lew up bodily and carried him to a watering trough at the far end of the barn.

"You disreputable old ruin, now see what's going to happen to you for poking fun at my singing," he said, as if he regretted the deed he was about to do. "When I get through drowning the seat of your pants in this trough, maybe you'll know enough to respect real talent when you hear it coming along the street."

Lew lay suspiciously quiet in Linn's arms.

"Boy, you are hurting my dignity," he said mildly. "In about a minute, if you don't behave yourself, I'm going to kick loose. Then I'm going to stand you on your head in a corner and go away and leave you to your own resources. How'd you get out of a predicament like that, I'd like to know?"

Linn appeared to ponder for a moment.

"Guess I hadn't better take any desperate chances," he decided, carefully standing Lew on his feet again.

Arm in arm they went back to the street. Then Linn spoke of the matter which had brought them both to town. "Tell be about the horse ride you and I are supposed to make."

"Why, a horse ride—just like I sent you word," Lew explained. "You and me, we're going up into the timber and build a corral somewhere. Then all the mavericks like you and all the old-timers like me, we're going to make a ride and gather the wild horses that are running up yonder."

Linn began to grumble.

"What will we get out of it besides experience?" he asked. Lew had already sent word that they were to have all the unbranded horses they corralled, but Colby chose to ignore this fact, trying to elicit a detailed explanation, knowing Lew disliked to be called upon for explanations.

Lew refused to give a direct answer on this occasion.

"What will we get besides the experience?" he said. "We'll get to see the country, won't we—some trees and streams and mountains. Why, boy, there are people who'd pay money to make the ride we're going to make."

"I suppose so," Linn agreed, still pretending to grumble. "Experience and country! A lot to get and a lot to see. Where are your horses? We'd better be roving along."

In Central Oregon the sheep and cattle country spreads out to the east, to the west, to the north and to the south of Prineville. The old settlers remember

the time when antelope and deer and wild horses in countless thousands ranged, fat and contented, over the open bunch-grass lands and in the timber. Now the antelope are gone; the deer have been slaughtered; and Trask and Colby were on their way to prepare for the last round-up of wild horses. They planned to gather the horses in the timber east of Grizzly Butte, drive them down Willow Creek, out across the Lamonta flat, and deliver them to buyers at the old horse corrals near Madras.

Grizzly Butte, almost midway between Madras on the north and Prineville on the south, stands like a sentinel outpost near the eastern edge of the Deschutes Plateau. North and south of Grizzly, receding ever eastward, rise the higher mountains. Although most of that vast mountainous area is covered with timber, its primeval parks and groves and glades are known intimately by but a few—by the forest rangers and fire guards whose charge it is to preserve a great national heritage for the benefit of future generations, and by the stockmen whose sheep and cattle find pasturage there during the summer months. Occasionally a trapper rides through in search of favorable locations for winter trap lines. And sometimes hunters move quietly through the cool solitudes. Such were Lew Trask and Linn Colby; but their hunting was done with ropes, not with guns. They were hunters of horses, masters in the art of snaring and breaking wild bronses.

In the summer months the timber was always overgrazed, and the stockmen knew that the wild horses,

moving swiftly from place to place, took the best of the all too scanty grass. These horses had almost no commercial value, so early that spring the stockmen decided to eliminate them from the reserve. In order to avoid disputes over the division of the unbranded horses, the job had been turned over to Trask. He immediately sent word to Colby and declared him in on the deal. Linn, formerly top rider for one of the big outfits, was beginning to run a few cattle of his own and had bought a small ranch north of Grizzly; and—in theory—was beginning to appreciate the value of time and cash. Now, although he had joined this venture willingly enough, as they left Prineville and rode through the narrow valley of the Ochoco, he reverted to the matter of profit.

"More country and more experience!" he repeated plaintively. "What else did you say we would get out of this deal?"

"We are to get all the unbranded horses that are corralled," Lew explained patiently. "The stockmen who use the timber have agreed to that; and they have also agreed to send riders to help in the round-up."

"Huh! Forty or fifty little fuzz tails that will sell for seven or eight dollars a head! Say, man, don't you think my time is worth anything?"

"Since when have you been counting the value of time—or anything else?" Lew chided. He was four years older than Linn and by virtue of the difference in their ages affected a paternal attitude. "Shame on you! Wait until you are as old as I am before you

begin figuring in minutes. Besides, if your time is worth so much, why are you making the ride?"

"I'll tell you," Linn confided. "I'm riding with you to see if we can bring in the brown outlaw."

Lew shook his head in simulated sorrow.

"Linn, aren't you ever going to grow up and quit believing in fairy tales? Why, boy, the old-timers say it was fifteen years ago that Kohles rode the brown horse into the timber and disappeared. A man like Kohles wouldn't have been trying to break a horse that was less than five years old. Add five and fifteen. You know as well as I do that no horse could survive twenty winters in the deep snow in the timber."

"What about Gooding up on Crooked River?" Colby persisted. "And what about Harry Dupree over on Trout Creek?"

Trask refused to argue further. The brown outlaw, like religion, was a subject that couldn't be argued satisfactorily. One either believed the stories that were current, or one did not believe. All that was known definitely about the horse was that some fifteen years earlier a stockman living on the Madras side of the range—a man named Kohles—one day told some of his neighbors he had rounded up a band of fuzz tails and that among them was a brown horse which he intended to ride the following forenoon. The next morning two of the neighbors, eager to see the horse perform, went over to the Kohles ranch. When they reached the place Kohles had disappeared. His corral gate was broken open, and tracks down through a plowed field showed that a horse had passed that

way, running and bucking, headed for the timber. Nothing had been heard of Kohles since then. It was known his affairs were in bad shape, and there were many who believed he had simply skipped out of the district. Others believed he had succeeded in riding the horse as far as the timber and there, under the low branches, had met his death.

As a usual thing, when a horse carrying a heavy stock saddle goes back to the wild ones its subsequent career is short. Shunned by other horses, tormented by the unaccustomed weight of the saddle and by the flopping stirrups, it loses flesh and courage rapidly. Ugly gall sores form under the saddle, still further weakening it and breaking its spirit. Before long it falls an easy prey to prowling cougars, or else, utterly discouraged, lies down and ceases to struggle. Occasionally reports have been circulated on the Western range regarding horses that were able to free themselves of saddles by chewing through the cinch. Such reports have usually received small credence among range riders. But a legend had come into currency regarding the existence and cunning of the brown outlaw. From time to time rangers and riders coming down out of the timber would tell of having caught a fleeting glimpse of a brown horse with black mane and tail and with white saddle scars on its back—a brown horse that hid in thickets of undergrowth when riders were near or else vanished mysteriously and silently in the heavy timber.

Several years after Kohles disappeared a rancher named Gooding who lived on Crooked River, above

Prineville, was brought into town badly bruised and battered. He told a wild tale about a brown horse he had driven down out of the timber with some of his young work stock. He said he had tried to ride the brown horse and that it had bucked its way through his corral gate, jumped several wire fences, and finally out in the sage, had thrown him and trampled on him and then disappeared. Several months later Gooding's saddle was found up near the timber with the cinch cut and frayed as if by blunt teeth. This fact lent an aspect of truth to Gooding's story.

Shortly after that, Harry Dupree, a young rider from the Trout Creek range, took up the search. One day Dupree's horse was discovered riderless, and a little later the men who found the horse met Dupree crawling painfully along the trail. Dupree's body was bruised and lacerated, and one leg was broken. He said he had discovered the outlaw and had succeeded in roping it and that the horse had fought with him, pulling him out of the saddle and trampling on him. What had happened after that he could not say except that when he regained consciousness the outlaw had disappeared and his own horse had wandered away.

Since that time Trask and Colby had made several trips into the timber searching for the outlaw. But Trask, when speaking about the horse, always took the view that no such animal existed. Now, as they jogged up toward the timber, he reiterated his disbelief.

"I'm not making the ride for the sake of seeing an

ornery old brown horse," he told Linn. "Why, boy, like I've said a hundred times, if ever there was such a horse he must have died of old age years ago.

"What I can't understand about this fellow Colby," he continued, as if speaking to a third person, "is how he gets the idea he could break a bad horse if he should meet up with one."

Linn was rated as one of the best riders in Central Oregon, but he was willing to be put on the defensive.

"The trouble with old-timers like Trask is that they use force instead of reason when working with broncs," he retorted, also addressing an imaginary third person. He continued then, elaborating on the value of gentling wild horses before trying to ride them.

Lew listened courteously until Colby finished speaking. Then he mused, "I've noticed it's just the poor timid guys who believe in gentling the broncs before riding them."

"Is that so?" Linn said indignantly.

"I was just offering a general observation," Lew hastened to explain. "I may be wrong, as usual. We'll find out if ever we corral the brown outlaw."

"Are you going to let me ride him first?" Linn asked eagerly.

"If we corral him I'm going to give you a week in which to gentle him so that he won't want to buck when he's ridden," Trask promised. "After you've worked with him for a week, if he still acts fuzzy I'll get to ride him first."

Trask was imposing his conditions regarding the breaking of the brown horse as a jest, believing if the

outlaw should be captured Linn would be too eager to try his skill as a rider to waste any time in preliminary gentling. But for the moment Colby accepted the conditions literally. He knew there were some riders who believed the sane way to break a wild horse was to gentle it before riding it. For himself, he had always believed the way to do was to rope the horse and saddle it and ride it. That was the good old-fashioned way—fast, and usually effective. Time enough to gentle a horse after the animal had learned who was boss.

Late that afternoon Trask and Colby crossed the summit of a long high ridge in the heart of the timber where the wild horses ranged. Some twenty miles to the west loomed Grizzly Butte. Converging toward the high ridge from the east were a number of lesser ridges which with their intervening valleys made natural runways for the horses. From the southern end of the high ridge there were but two natural avenues of escape, Mill Creek and McKay Creek; from the northern end, two branches of Trout Creek. The western face of the ridge was broken into precipitous cliffs and steep slopes that were covered with thickets of tangled undergrowth. There was one place on the western side, not so steep as the rest, where a broad trail led down to the headwaters of Willow Creek.

The men rode down along this trail until they came to an open grassy glade of some fourteen or fifteen acres. At this place they intended to establish a temporary camp and build a corral. The afternoon was waning when they reached the glade; the sun, behind a

shoulder of Grizzly Butte, was sinking into a banked cumulus of vivid reds and purples; and under the tall trees that surrounded the glade the shadows were melting away and blending with the deepening twilight. Before the men dismounted they rode around the edge of the opening, studying the lay of the ground. They stopped for a moment near a thicket of jack pines at the lower end.

"A good place to cut our brush and poles," Colby said.

Trask did not answer. He was looking back into the timber through which they had just ridden, listening to the muffled drumming of running feet. Soon a band of wild horses raced into the glade. When they perceived the riders they swerved and, without checking their headlong flight, plunged back into the dark recesses of the timber. One of the horses, as if suspicious of danger, had stopped before reaching the open flat, and that one led the others in their swift retreat.

Trask glanced at Colby.

"Linn," he said, "how many fuzz tails were there in the band."

"Eight," Colby answered promptly.

"There were nine," Lew corrected. "One of them didn't come out into the open. A crafty fellow! He stopped before he reached the glade. A brown horse, Linn—a brown horse that went slipping off like a shadow under the trees."

Linn turned in his saddle and rested his hands on the horn as he answered Trask.

"A fairy tale!" he said reproachfully. "Aren't you

ashamed, Lew Trask, trying to make me believe a yarn like that? I suppose you want me to believe you even saw the saddle marks on his back?"

"I didn't see the saddle marks," Lew admitted. "He was too far off, and it's too dark there under the trees, to see any markings distinctly. But it was a brown horse—one I've never seen before. Wouldn't it be the meanest sort of luck if he should go and hide somewhere until after the round-up!"

"There you go, raving just like everybody else," Linn reproved. "You talk as if the horse could reason like a human being, only smarter. Aren't you forgetting you've always argued that there was no such horse. I'm saying you didn't see him any more than I did. And I want you to remember you've promised me the first chance with him after he's corralled. And it's too late to start building the corral, so let's start a fire and stew up something to eat."

For the next few days they worked cutting poles and brush and erecting a barrier under the trees around the edge of a glade—a barrier too high for horses to jump and too dense to be easily penetrated. A wide gateway was left at the upper end where the trail entered the glade. From this gateway wings were built diverging out into the timber away from the trail. When the work was finished they rode back to a fire guard's cabin on the high ridge and telephoned to the stockmen, who were to send riders to help in the round-up. They feared there would not be enough men responding to make a clean sweep of the horses in those rugged, timbered hills. But at dawn of the

day set for that last ride, when the rim of the morning sun showed in a glowing crescent above the eastern horizon and revolvers began to bark along the line, telling that the round-up was under way, it seemed as if all the riders in Central Oregon had turned out for the occasion. A cordon of horsemen rode forward in a great semi-circle that reached from the barren hills beyond Trout Creek on the north to the headwaters of the Ochoco on the south. There were young riders, conspicuous in big hats and vivid chaps; there were men in the prime of life, shrewd, aggressive business men who were transforming the old slipshod methods of the range with their knowledge of scientific agriculture and animal husbandry; and there were old men who sat their horses stolidly and who spoke to each other regretfully of days that were gone—days when the whole sweep of country from the Columbia River south to the high desert was an unfenced pasture where wild horses ranged in such numbers that sometimes a single band traveled from dawn until dusk in passing a given point. These older men, like the young lads, were making the ride as a matter of sentiment, that they, too, might be able to say they had ridden in the last horse round-up.

It was one of these older men who first sighted a bunch of wild horses after the line began moving westward toward the glade where Trask and Colby had erected their corral.

"Are those fuzz tails or cow critters?" he asked; then answered his own question. "Fuzz tails," he said. "Four of them. Spread out a bit," he called to the

men who were riding near him. "And mind," he added, repeating the orders that were to govern the round-up, "if a horse breaks back through the line, shoot it. We don't want to leave any in the timber."

As the line advanced, other bands were sighted by other groups of riders. Most of these wild horses were small animals, buckskin and bluish gray in color—throwbacks to the early feral stock. Many carried the mark of the primitive horse, a narrow line of black hair running from mane to tail. Occasionally one of the wild horses, fearing a trap ahead, believing they were leaving freedom behind them, would whirl and dash back through the line—an easy target for the quick guns of the riders.

Linn and Lew did not ride with the rest of the men. They had elected to stay near the corral to prevent the escape of the horses that were driven in, and to watch for a possible break in the barrier they had built around the glade. They left their pack horses in the corral—decoys to attract the first wild horses that came down the trail. Out in the timber beyond the wings they built blinds of poles and brush behind which to conceal themselves and the horses they were riding. Other riders were stationed at the trails leading down from the northern and southern ends of the high ridge. Thus, when the wild horses reached the summit of the ridge after being driven out of the hills to the east, they found but one trail open and unguarded—the trail that led down into the corral.

There were other wild creatures in the timber besides the horses. An old antlered buck was first to cross the

ridge in leisurely flight. For him the barrier inclosing the glades was no obstacle. Without apparent effort he cleared the high fence and continued on his way toward the slopes of Grizzly Butte. Then came several bucks and does together and they, too, leaped the barrier without pausing. Later a bear came shuffling down the trail. Trask and Colby, fearing he would stampede the pack horses, rode from their hiding places and turned him out around one wing of the corral. Soon a wild steer came—a tough old fellow with savage eyes and foam-flecked nostrils. He was also herded around one of the wings. The men had scarcely time to conceal themselves again when a cougar crept stealthily down through the trees; but he was quick to catch the man scent and turned back and was not seen again.

Then came the first of the wild horses. A band of a dozen led by a fleet stallion raced down the trail and into the glade. When they discovered the barrier under the trees at the edge of the grassy flat they began to circle the inclosure nervously. Suddenly, as if by common impulse, they turned back toward the open gateway; but Trask and Colby were there to block their escape. Reluctantly these horses drifted down to the lower edge of the corral and began to graze restlessly.

From time to time as the sun rose to its high meridian and began its westerly descent, other bands of horses came swiftly along the trail—smaller bands of four and five and six together. Trask and Colby, waiting with the inherent patience of hunters, watched

always for the brown outlaw. The afternoon was nearly gone when he came, a solitary horse that moved silently among the trees far to one side of the trail—a brown horse, saddle marked, with threadlike scars along his sides where sharp rowels had once ripped cruelly into the flesh. He advanced warily, his little sharp ears pointed and alert for suspicious sounds; his eyes, wide set and intelligent, searching constantly for a trap or for enemies. Within the wings of the corral he paused uncertainly. Instantly the men spurred out, their ropes uncoiled and whirling. Swift as was their charge the flight of the brown horse was swifter. Back into the timber he fled, dodging and twisting among the trees, making pursuit impossible. Trask threw his rope, but the noose dropped harmlessly behind the outlaw's heels; and Colby did not get close enough to throw at all. They accepted their failure philosophically, jesting as they always did.

"Well, did we see a brown horse?" Colby asked.

"Looked like a brown horse to me," Lew admitted.

"Sure it wasn't a phantom horse?" Linn persisted.

"Wait until we get a rope on him," Lew suggested.

"Then we'll find out whether he's a real horse or a phantom."

"Yes, wait until we get a rope on him," Colby jeered.

"Why, man, that horse is gone forever. He's too smart, now he knows there is a corral here, to ever come this way a second time."

"Either he'll come this way again or he's a dead horse," Lew answered.

"Did you ever hear of a bullet hurting a phantom horse?"

Lew raised one hand in token of defeat.

"Have it your way," he said, turning back toward his hiding place.

Half an hour later the riders who were closing in along the cliffs on the high ridge far to the north caught sight of the outlaw. Nearly every man who was riding that day had been hoping for a glimpse of the horse. As word of his discovery was passed along the line, the men closed in swiftly, making escape impossible. Warily the outlaw circled and doubled in front of the advancing line; before long he came again to the open wings of the corral. This time he did not hesitate, but trotted deliberately into the glade. Twice he circled the inclosure seeking an opening through which he might win to freedom. But the gateway was closed by a group of riders, and there was no other break in the high barrier.

The brown horse did not begin grazing, as most of the wild horses had done when they found themselves trapped. Instead he kept moving constantly, restlessly, his head held high and proudly. He knew he was trapped. He knew he was again held by men—his lifelong enemies. Twice before he had been captured, and twice there had followed never to be forgotten experiences with torturing ropes and punishing spurs. And once a bullet from the gun of a discouraged hunter had torn a stinging brand across his jaw and neck. Now he was trapped again, and he

moved nervously among the other wild horses, dreading the ordeal that was to be his.

He was built like a desert horse, light of bone but well muscled, with long, clean, tapering limbs and a body that sloped sharply back from the deep chest to the flat groins and lean flanks. A handsome horse, symmetrical in every line. But the riders noticed most the well-shaped, intelligent head and the smooth, springy step with which he moved.

"A snake!" Lew said approvingly. "A regular cavorting reptile! Your horse, Linn. Let's see you ride him." He spoke regretfully, repenting his hasty promise to let Linn have the first chance with the horse.

Linn grinned, knowing how eager Lew was to ride the outlaw.

"I thank you for the courtesy," he answered. "But you promised me I could have a week in which to gentle him."

One of the older men who had been sitting his horse near them, put in a word.

"What's the matter?" he asked Colby bluntly. "Are you afraid of the horse's reputation?"

Colby had been jesting, just as Lew had jested with him a few days earlier. He had had no intention of wasting time gentling the brown horse. But when the older man suggested he might be afraid of the outlaw he became obstinate.

"Aw, toot, toot, toot," he answered impatiently. "That horse isn't a bad 'un. Look at his head. You never saw a bad horse with such a wide forehead or such a straight nose. A good horse! I'm going to

take a week to prove he isn't an outlaw. Put it down in your book he won't be ridden for a week. But if you're plumb determined to see some riding, why, point out the fuzz tails, and Lew and me, we'll be glad to accommodate you."

"Sure, we'll be glad to oblige you," Lew supplemented. "I won't speak for myself, but I have some money that says Linn can ride any horse in the corral, not barring the outlaw."

Some of the other stockmen objected to a riding exhibition at that time.

"Better not start anything," one of them advised. "If you begin roping and riding up here, you'll start a stampede that will send these wild ones busting right back into the timber again."

The conservative opinion prevailed. Nearly two hundred horses were milling in the corral. Some of them were branded and these branded ones were to be separated from the rest the following morning and returned to their owners. The riders who were not needed began leaving for their homes and the others set about establishing their camp for the night. The old fellow who had suggested that Colby might be afraid to ride the brown horse stopped for a parting shot as he was leaving.

"So you are going to gentle the outlaw before you ride him," he said. "I thought you had worked with horses long enough to know a bad horse can't be gentled. Don't take any chances with this one, my boy. If he's a killer like he's supposed to be, the first time he catches you off your guard he'll get you."

Colby was none too courteous in acknowledging the older man's advice.

"Huh!" he grunted. "If ever that old brown goat tries to act smart with me I'll tie him up with a ribbon and put him in a basket and send him over for your riders to tame."

The old man, having delivered his opinion, rode stolidly away, paying no heed to the retort.

Colby glanced helplessly at Trask.

"Well, dog-gone the old coot," he said peevishly. "He seems determined to make me work with the horse whether I want to or not."

"You'll sure have to now," Lew agreed. "After all the bragging you've been doing about how easily you can gentle outlaws—"

"I've never bragged a word," Linn protested.

"Of course you've bragged," Lew insisted. "Now it's up to you to make good. And I'm telling you the old man is right. The brown horse is a regular goblin—he'll sure get you if you don't watch out."

A cheering thought occurred to Linn.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said, brightening up considerably. "When we get down to Madras you make a big talk about wanting to ride him. Just insist upon riding him, Lew. After a while, because we're good friends and all of that, I'll reluctantly consent to let you take a whirl with him. That way you'll get credit for riding a horse that's rated as the worse outlaw in the country; and I'll have a perfectly good alibi for not gentling him. Why, dog-gone it, Lew, I can't afford to waste a whole week with a horse."

Lew shook his head sympathetically, but refused to consent.

"I appreciate the compliment," he said; "but I'd be afraid to try to ride a horse like that one. Honest, I would. Why, he's a terrible-acting fellow. No, Linn, it's up to you. You've been bragging all over the range that you could gentle him in a week. Now go to it—and I'm wishing you well. But I'm not betting any money on you this time."

"And you've been advertising yourself as a friend of mine!" Linn said reproachfully. "Well, just to show it can be done I'm going to gentle him. In a week I'll have him eating out of my hand. Yes, I will. I'll be riding him bareback. Have you put that down in your book? All right. Now's let's go and eat."

Early the next morning the branded horses were separated from the unbranded ones and penned in a small hastily constructed corral. Then the lower end of the big inclosure was opened and two gentle horses from the Madras range were turned loose in the trail that led down along Willow Creek. These gentle horses, eager to return to their home pasture, started at a brisk lope along the trail. The wild horses poured out of the big corral and, hazed and hurried by yelling riders, followed swiftly. Hour after hour they were driven relentlessly, ceaselessly; mile after mile they fled before their tireless pursuers. They left the timber behind them, then the ranches along Willow Creek, then the sage land of the Lamonta flat. Finally, late in the afternoon, wearied to tractability, they turned willingly into the old corrals near Madras.

As soon as the buyers had accepted the horses, Colby and Trask drove the brown outlaw into a small corral and began to work with him. For two days the horse had been traveling constantly. They were going to commence to educate him while he was still weary and gaunt with hunger and thirst. First they roped and threw him. Then Colby, kneeling on the outstretched neck, rigged a hackamore—a rope halter with which to lead him. As soon as the hackamore was properly knotted he took time to settle the question of the horse's age—a matter which could be determined with a certain degree of accuracy by the shape and condition of the teeth.

"Will you look at them!" he called to Lew, at the same time shifting his weight to the horse's head and pulling back the pendulous lips. "I'll say he's an old bird. Even his grinders are in bad shape. He'll never see twenty again. And he'll never live through another winter unless he's well cared for— Hey! Hang on to your rope a moment longer."

Lew, perversely, had slackened the rope that held the outlaw's front feet and the horse had immediately begun to struggle madly. Linn, grinning good-naturedly, jumped back out of danger, grabbed up the end of his hackamore rope, and swung into his saddle. Then he nodded to Lew, signaling him to loosen his rope. As the brown horse rose, plunging and ready to fight, Colby rode in and snubbed him close to the saddle horn. There followed a battle royal as the outlaw struggled to break the rope; but his head was held too high, too close to the saddle horn, for his efforts

to be effective; and the horse Colby rode was too big and stout and too well-trained to yield ground to the wild fellow. During the struggle Trask opened the corral gate and Colby rode out, his horse dragging the outlaw unceremoniously beside him.

Matter-of-fact workers, Linn and Lew. Breaking horses was their business. They knew a wild horse never learns much until he is too tired to fight, and they intended to keep the outlaw traveling until he was exhausted. He had been driven at a fast gallop all day with the rest of the wild horses; now they intended to lead him back to Colby's place just below the timber line of Grizzly Butte. They believed he would be reasonably docile by the time he had gone that much farther.

When they were out on the highway it became evident that at one time the brown horse had been broken to the halter. At times, as if obeying an almost forgotten habit, he trotted quietly beside Colby's horse. Then, remembering the presence of the men, he would begin fighting again, striking and kicking wickedly. This intermittent fighting made progress slow and it was past midnight when they turned in at Colby's gate. At the barn door the brown horse made a final desperate effort to escape; but Colby, with a word to his big mount, rode in, dragging the struggling outlaw with him. There the horse was left for the night, tied securely to a heavy beam above one of the mangers.

"Well, what do you think of him now?" Trask asked after they had gone to the house. "Did we tire him out? I'll say we didn't. I never saw such a brute for

endurance. A combination of tempered steel and pure cussedness! I'll bet that to-morrow morning he'll be just as full of pep and vinegar as ever."

"Aw, toot, toot, toot," Linn answered sleepily. "Bad, nothing. A regular old gentleman! You'd fight, too, if you'd been treated as that fellow has."

"Not now, I wouldn't fight," Lew said. "I'm too dog-gone tired."

"I'm a bit tired myself," Linn admitted. "Shall I stew up something to eat, or shall we go to bed and eat twice as much in the morning?"

Lew had already begun to pull of his chaps.

"Who said anything about eating or sleeping?" he grunted. "A considerate host would have said: 'What will you drink?'"

"You are right, as usual," Linn agreed. "And a law-abiding guest would have answered, 'Water, please.'"

"Aw, stop talking and go to bed," said Lew.

The next morning while Linn was getting breakfast Lew went out to care for the stock. After he had watered and fed the rest of the animals, he saddled his horse. Then, mounted and carrying a heavy quirt as a measure of precaution, he led the outlaw down to the trough. But the brown horse was too nervous, too fearful of the strange environment, to drink. Several times he thrust his muzzle into the water, only to leap back snorting with suspicion. The trough was a man-made affair—different from the cool springs where he was wont to slake his thirst in the timber. Each time he drew back from the trough he lifted his old head

and stood looking out toward the dark green slopes of Grizzly. His distended nostrils had caught the faint pungent fragrance of balsam borne on the morning breeze. Restlessly he began edging away from Trask's horse, craftily, almost imperceptibly shifting his weight from foot to foot.

Trask, sitting sidewise in the saddle, alert, watchful, unconsciously hefting the shot-loaded quirt with one hand, felt a quick urge of sympathy for the outlaw and gave him more rope than was wise in order that the old fellow might drink freely if he overcame his fear of the trough. An old horse, eager to return to the haunts where he had spent his life. Why should a man be unduly careful? An old horse, so old that the brown coat, once sleek and smooth, now showed coarse in spots, and rough. An old gaunt horse with deep hollows above the brown, black-pupiled eyes.

But age had not dimmed the fire in those old eyes, nor abated the anger that welled up in the old heart toward these puny men creatures who could torture so cunningly with ropes and saddles and spurs. Only by the slightest swaying of the outlaw's suddenly lowered head was Trask warned of the impending attack. Swiftly, as if aware that Trask was again on guard, the brown horse whirled, reared to his full height, and then struck with both front feet.

Colby had been watching from the kitchen window. As the outlaw reared and struck, he snatched up a gun and ran into the barn lot. But Lew, warned by that first slight swaying of the outlaw's head, had driven his horse in to meet the attack. Avoiding the

striking hoofs by a hair's breadth, he rose in his stirrups and brought the butt of the weighted quirt crashing down between the pointed brown ears. The outlaw dropped to his knees; then struggled gamely to his feet again. As he rose, staggering dizzily, Lew began using the lash of the quirt, flaying systematically from withers to rump.

"Maybe this will teach you something," he kept repeating as the lash rose and fell.

"Give him hell," Linn encouraged cheerfully.

Lew stopped whipping, aware for the first time that Linn was watching.

"Did you see what the old devil tried to do to me?" he asked. "Why, dog-gone his old hide, just when I was trying to be good to him he sneaked up and tried to slap me."

"Yes, I saw him," Linn said. "If you had petted him and told him you were trying to be good to him, he would never have acted so rude."

"Petted him!" Lew exploded. "Say, if you think he's such a sweet old thing, why did you come running out with that gun?"

Linn looked at the weapon as if he had forgotten it.

"It is a gun, sure enough," he admitted. "Why did I bring it out with me? Let me think. Oh, yes, I remember. I was just going to play a little joke on you. I was going to shoot some gunpowder into your eggs and make you believe it was pepper. Yes, that's what I was going to use the gun for. Now I'd better go back and tend to the eggs. I reckon they are pretty well fried by this time."

"Go and serve 'em," Lew said. "Go and serve 'em, I'll be swarming down there just as soon as I tie this old brown goat up again."

At the breakfast table Lew was more serious than was his habit, and Linn asked what was worrying him.

"I'm not worrying," Lew answered. "But I have some business to tend to in Prineville. Ought to be over there this afternoon."

"Yes?" Linn prompted.

"And I've been thinking about that horse. He's an ornery old snake, Linn. Let's ride him this morning and have it over with. Sometimes even fair to middling riders like ourselves take a spill. I hate to think of what that outlaw horse would do to a fellow if he got him down in a corral when no one was sticking around with a gun."

It was seldom that Lew showed so much respect for a horse, and Linn's eyes began to twinkle.

"Aw, toot, toot, toot," he jeered. "Like I've told you a hundred times, the horse isn't a bad 'un. He fights like any regular guy would fight if imposed upon. Within a week he'll be eating out of my hand. Wait and see if he isn't."

"In less than a week he'll grab your hand clear off if you don't watch him every minute," Lew warned. "Let's go down and ride him now. If you are afraid of him, I'll take a chance."

Linn refused to be insulted.

"My horse!" he said. "Come back in a week and watch me ride him bareback."

Lew let the matter rest then. A few minutes later

they strolled down to the barn and he led his horse out, ready for the trip across the butte and down to Prineville.

"Well, so long," he said, as he swung into the saddle. Then he turned back, "Linn, you watch that old devil. And don't you try to ride him until I get back."

"I'm going to ride him a week from to-day," Linn answered. "Better be on hand if you want to see a real horse trainer do his stuff."

Colby leaned against the barn and watched until Lew rode out of sight over the first low ridge beyond the ranch. Then he went into the barn and walked over to the outlaw's stall. This stall, walled to the mow with heavy three-inch planks, had been built especially for handling wild horses and was so constructed that a man could work with comparative safety either at an animal's head or heels. Colby tied the outlaw's head close to the heavy beam above the manger—so close it could move only a few inches from side to side.

"Now, old fellow," he said soothingly, "you and I are both going to learn something this week. You are going to learn how to act like a gentleman; and I am going to learn how to teach you to act that way. You see, it's this way; usually I ride 'em first and in the course of time they just naturally become more or less gentle. But I'm going to gentle you first—whoa, you darned old fool!" He had reached out to stroke the brown neck and the horse had begun to fight, jerking back against the short stout rope, throwing its body from side to side, kicking viciously at the walls of the stall.

"No sense in acting that way," Linn continued patiently. "You might as well make up your mind to get used to me, because you are sure going to enjoy my company for a week." While the horse was still struggling and fighting, he rested his hand firmly against its neck, increasing the pressure until the horse became quiet. Then he went on talking soothingly. "I don't wonder you are nervous. I'd be nervous myself if I were in your fix. Now, behave yourself!" He had moved his hand slightly and he could feel the outlaw's muscles quivering and growing tense. He continued to move his hand slowly down toward the shoulder, at the same time watching the horse's dilated eyes, expecting another mad struggle. But this time the horse did not fight blindly. Instead, when Linn's hand reached its shoulder it kicked once with incredible accuracy and the sharp-edged hoof left a bleeding wound across Linn's knuckles. Linn swore mildly, not in anger but in amazement. He didn't believe the horse could reach that far with its hind foot. But it would never do to let the old outlaw know it had scored a point. He moved his hand up toward its head and continued talking in the same low tone.

"Like I said, you old goat, this gentling business is as new to me as it is to you, and if you want to get along with me you'll have to behave yourself. After a while I'm going to the house to bandage my hand. But first I'm going to name you. Are brownies supposed to be good goblins or bad goblins? No matter; I'm going to call you Brownie." He emphasized the name and then paused for a moment. He had long since

learned the trick of teaching a horse to recognize a given name. "Brownie!" he repeated with the same sharp emphasis. "A good name for you. You'll be a good brownie when I get through with you. And to teach you to heed me, I'll have to begin bribing you. Same system a fellow uses with a girl. The only difference is that the girl falls for flowers and candy. Brownie, you old goat, what can I bribe you with? You've never eaten oats and there's no sense in offering you something you know nothing about. No sense in offering you sugar, either, until you've acquired the habit. I have it! Salt! I'll bet you are hungry for salt. I'll feed you some mixed with sugar. Before long you'll be asking for sugar without the salt. How's that? Not such bad figuring for an old buckaroo like me. Yes—no?"

Linn went up to the house then and bandaged his hand. When he returned he brought a mixture of salt and sugar with him.

"Brownie," he called sharply as he entered the barn. He repeated the call more softly as he approached the stall. Then he stood for a time talking to the horse. After a while he touched the arched neck again; and again there followed a vicious struggle. As soon as the horse ceased its fighting he began to stroke its neck, talking soothingly, coaxingly. Then he lengthened the hackamore rope and poured the salt and sugar into the feed box. The outlaw sniffed the mixture suspiciously once or twice before he began licking it up with eager relish.

"Brownie, you'll be ready to drink soon," Linn com-

mented. "Now I'll saddle a riding horse and lead you out to the trough. See to it that you behave better than you did when Lew led you out this morning."

Thus began the second phase of the brown outlaw's education. In his earlier brief encounter with men he had learned to match brute cunning with human skill, vicious punishment with still more vicious retaliation. Now he was to learn the meaning of kindness and patience; was to learn to respond eagerly to gentle, understanding treatment. Linn worked with infinite patience, hour after hour, teaching the old fellow the uselessness of fighting; the futility of kicking and striking and biting. After each lesson a bit of sugar was given as a reward for achievement. And constantly Linn kept repeating the name he had chosen, using always the same sharp, coaxing tone. The morning of the fifth day when he entered the barn he spoke to the horse as usual.

"Brownie!" he called.

He was answered by an eager whinny; and the brown horse turned in his stall, tugging impatiently at the rope that held him. Linn was jubilant. He knew the victory was his; that the old outlaw was an outlaw no longer. Never before had he risked going into the stall with the horse. Now he entered without hesitating. For a time he stood petting the old fellow, feeding him the sugar that was usually given at the end of a lesson. During the rest of the morning he worked out in the corral, saddling and unsaddling the horse; preparing in every possible way for the time when Lew would be present to see the result of his efforts. Only

two days more to wait. Linn believed by that time he would be able to make good his jesting boast about riding without a saddle.

At noon as he was preparing his dinner he heard a familiar hail from the barn lot. He opened the door and waved a greeting.

"Lew, you shiftless old tramp, come in," he called. "You are just in time, as usual. Shall I serve yours straight up or flopped over?"

"Flop 'em over and serve 'em soon," Lew answered, his face lighting up at the sight of his friend. "Linn, have you tried to ride the brown horse yet?"

"I'm ready to ride him right now," Linn replied. "Yes, sir. I'm the original horse-gentling kid. I would have ridden him this morning if I hadn't promised to wait until you returned."

"I was afraid you would be trying some such foolishness," Lew said. "Now go on back and fry a couple of eggs for me while I'm putting my horse in the barn."

He cared for his horse and then stopped for a moment to look at the brown outlaw.

"Well, you old devil!" he said. "If you had finished Colby like you finished Kohles long ago, I would have trailed you and killed you if it took a thousand years. That's right, begin to squirm." The outlaw, as if aware of Lew's unfriendly attitude, had laid its ear back and was shifting nervously from foot to foot. "I'll give you something to squirm for when I ride you this afternoon," Lew added as he turned back toward the house.

Dinner was ready for him, but instead of jesting as usual he sat down and ate for a time in silence.

Finally he spoke, voicing the thought that had prompted him to return two days earlier than he had intended.

"Do you suppose he'll try to buck through the corral gate like he did with Kohles and Gooding?"

"Aw, toot, toot, toot!" Linn chuckled, thinking of the surprise that was in store for Lew. He began to chant the horse auctioneer's well-known ballyboo. "A gentle horse! A lady's horse! A baby's horse! Broke to work, ride or drive. How much am I offered for him? Speak up, gentlemen, speak up. How much am I bid?"

Lew smiled mechanically, but refused to be diverted from his purpose.

"Linn, I want to ride that horse myself."

Linn grew serious for a moment. Now that he had partly gentled the horse, he wanted to finish the job; wanted to prove to his own satisfaction that the outlaw was not inherently bad.

"Look here, Lew," he said. "You gave me a week in which to gentle him."

"I know I did. But I'm telling you I want to ride him myself. Why, Linn, I'm afraid of that old devil; either that or I'm afraid that I'm afraid. I don't know which it is. But I've got to ride him in order to get hold of myself again."

There was something that didn't ring true in Lew's statement, or in the way he made the statement—Linn couldn't decide which. He began to believe Lew had been drinking, and Lew was inclined to be stubborn at such times. But what difference? Lew was his

friend—and the old brown was just an old brown horse. He began to jest again.

“Aren’t you afraid the old goat will throw you and get mud in your ears?”

“That’s what I want to find out—whether he can throw me or not,” Lew answered without smiling, still holding to his first fiction. “And I want to find out whether I’m afraid of the horse or afraid of being afraid.”

Still Linn hesitated, reluctant, now that he had won the horse’s confidence, to see the old fellow ridden as Lew would ride him—with spurs and quirt.

“Aw, let me ride him my way,” he urged. But Lew shook his head stubbornly.

Linn shrugged his shoulders then. No sense in arguing with a man who was determined to have his own way!

“All right, fly at him,” he said. Then he lifted his voice in a woeful lament, “Oh, bury him out on the lone prairie-e-e—”

“Quit your howling, you poor coyote,” Lew said, smiling for the first time.

When they finished eating, Lew would not even wait to help with the dishes.

“No,” he said. “I’m going out and ride him now.”

“Let me show him off a bit first,” Linn coaxed, following Lew out to the barn. “You take your saddle into the little corral and I’ll bring the horse out.”

Lew carried his saddle out to the corral. Then he turned, waiting impatiently. His eyes widened for an instant when Linn strolled unconcernedly out of the

barn with the brown horse following at his shoulder. The barn formed one segment of a large stoutly built corral in which the watering trough was located. Adjacent to this large corral was a small inclosure. When the horse perceived Lew standing near the gate of the small corral, all evidence of his newly acquired docility vanished. His muscles became tense and he lowered his head and began swaying it from side to side, and with mincing, sidling steps he began to edge away from Linn. In that instant he revealed all the marks of a killer. Even his eyes protruded, showing a line of maniacal white.

"Watch him!" Lew cried, tugging frantically at a revolver that was still strapped in its boot at his saddle horn. Linn glanced at the horse in astonishment.

"Brownie!" he said sharply. "Brownie, come here!" He tugged at the hackamore rope and the horse stopped in its tracks and slowly lifted its head and glanced at him. Slowly the flame of wildness died in the wide-set eyes; slowly, step by step as Linn continued to tug at the rope, the old fellow advanced until his damp brown nose was nuzzling against Linn's arm. "No more of that rough stuff," Linn said firmly.

Then he spoke to Lew, half apologetically.

"He must be a one-man horse. He wouldn't have acted that way if he knew you."

Lew had pulled the gun free from the holster and stood with his arm raised, his finger on the trigger.

"Watch him, Linn! Watch him!" he cautioned. "I tell you the brute's a born killer."

"No, he's not a killer," Linn answered. "Not a born

killer. Maybe he remembered how you whipped him that morning when you led him out to water. He's not a bad horse, Lew. If you don't mind I'll ride him bare-back right now."

Again Lew shook his head stubbornly.

"I'm going to ride him first," he said with dogged insistence.

"All right," Linn said. "Go back into the corral and let me saddle him." Linn's features had settled in drawn, hard lines; and his eyes, usually frank and direct, avoided Lew's glance. He couldn't remember when anything had gotten him like this. Lew was his friend, and if Lew wanted to ride the brown horse there could be no argument. But as he stood stroking the horse he felt as if he were betraying one friend for another. Then he picked up Lew's big saddle and hooked the near stirrup over the horn.

"Easy, Brownie," he said soothingly as he settled the saddle on the scarred brown back. For a moment the horse stood trembling, then became quiet again. As soon as the cinch was tightened, Linn cupped one hand over the old fellow's left eye to prevent him from seeing who was getting into the saddle. Then he nodded to Lew.

Before Lew mounted he handed Linn his gun.

"Don't be afraid to use it if the horse gets the best of me," he said, slipping easily into the saddle.

Linn spoke to the horse:

"Steady, Brownie! Steady!"

For a moment the outlaw stood quietly watching Linn. Then aware of the weight on his back, he lifted

his head. Lew immediately raked the spur-scarred brown sides with his rowels. And Linn jumped to one side to avoid the first mad plunge.

"An earthquake and forked lightning combined!" he said to himself as he scrambled to the top rail of the corral and watched the horse pitching and whirling. Then he rose, ready to jump, and stood there with held breath. The outlaw had crashed sidewise into the corral gate and Lew had received the brunt of the crash on his right leg. Then the horse bucked back across the corral, whirling, back-bucking, sunfishing. Most wild horses bawl and scream with rage when bucking that way; but the brown horse fought in silent frenzy. Lew continued to ride straight up; but he was no longer spurring, evidently in distress. Again without preliminary warning the horse crashed into the gate, this time into the left side.

There followed a rending and splintering of wooden panels, a cry from Lew. And the horse, still pitching madly, bucked through into the large corral.

Linn leaped from his place of vantage and followed with the gun held ready for action, for Lew was reeling in the saddle, holding desperately to the horn. The horse, seeming to realize that he had loosened the rider, increased his efforts. Then Lew was thrown. As his body hurtled through the air both feet dangled grotesquely. Both legs were broken at the ankles. Immediately the outlaw began to edge toward the prone body with that curious, mincing, sidling step that a horse uses when about to kill. Linn sighted along the gun barrel and started to squeeze the trigger; but some

emotional inhibition, some subconscious impulse of sympathy for the horse stayed his finger.

"Brownie!" he called. "Brownie!" The outlaw paused and lifted his swaying head. The wide space between the questioning brown eyes presented a target a man could not miss, and again Linn started to squeeze the trigger. Again he hesitated. Then, lowering the gun, he ran over and picked up the trailing hackamore rope and led the horse into the barn. Slamming the door behind him, he ran back to Lew and knelt beside him. Lew's face was ghastly white, but he managed a wan grin. Professional pride was uppermost in his mind.

"If the old devil had been satisfied to break just one of my legs he never would have thrown me," he said. "But when he wrecked both of them I began clawing the sky."

"Good riding, old man," Linn said with honest admiration. "Now lie still and I'll tie you up in splints and carry you to the house. You'll have a sweet time for two or three hours—until we can get a doctor out from town."

"First I want you to kill that horse," Lew said.

Linn hesitated and glanced away from Lew's eyes.

"Not just now," he answered slowly. "I'm going to take care of you first. After a while I'll lead the old fellow up to that deep ditch at the upper end of the place."

"Well, watch him every minute," Lew cautioned.

Linn nodded, and then went about the task of fashioning splints. When these were bound to Lew's legs,

Linn picked him up and carried him to the house and made him comfortable as possible on one of the beds. As soon as Linn had telephoned for a doctor Lew spoke about the horse again. He spoke in short phrases with long pauses between; only that and the slow constant turning of his head revealed that he was suffering.

"Did you really think the horse was becoming gentle?"

"I believe he was beginning to have confidence in me," Linn answered.

There was another pause, and then Lew spoke again:

"Strange—how a horse never forgets a thing. I suppose it was—just chance—that he broke through Kohles' corral gate—years ago. But he didn't forget. When Gooding caught him—and tried to ride him—he still remembered how he had gotten the best of Kohles. So he—bucked right through—Gooding's gate. I got to thinking about that—back there in Prineville. I got to thinking maybe—you would take a chance—try to ride him before I got back. I knew if you did the old devil would buck—right through—your corral gate."

Lew was silent again for a time. And then it was that Linn realized why Lew had insisted on riding the horse.

"Well, you old fool!" he said huskily, affectionately.

Lew forced a grin, refusing to accept credit for his act.

"I just thought, Linn, that I was smarter than the horse. I thought that knowing—what to expect of him—I could beat him at his own game. But a man

can't get the best of a killer. So I want you to go out and shoot him. Then maybe—I can sleep—a little.”

“It will help some if you can sleep,” Linn said. He got his gun and went up to the barn, believing Lew would rest easier if the horse were put out of the way. At the barn door he paused.

“Brownie!” he called. There was no answering whinny; but the horse was waiting in the runway back of the stalls where he had been left. As if the affair in the corral was a closed incident he thrust out his muzzle for the sugar that Linn always fed him. Linn poured some from a cup that stood on a shelf above the feed bin, and let the horse eat from his hand. He noticed that the old brown coat was stiff and rough with drying lather, and that bloody, swollen welts showed along the shoulders and sides where Lew's rowels had cut the flesh.

Linn was decidedly thoughtful as he removed Lew's saddle and led the horse across the large corral and up toward a ridge that reached from the upper end of his place to one of the timbered slopes of the butte. The outlaw walked beside him patiently, quietly; stopped once and lifted his head and looked questioningly toward the dark green timber. Linn turned and began to stroke the arched neck, noticing again the rowel marks along the sweat-rumpled hair on the shoulders and sides.

“Brownie,” he said, voicing a thought that had been taking possession of his mind, “it was a fair fight and you won. If Lew wasn't my best friend I would take you up to the timber and turn you loose. But Lew, he

wants me to shoot you. So you'll have to come along."

They went on then, side by side, like two friends strolling together, until they came to the ditch that Linn intended to use for the outlaw's grave. When they stopped at the edge of the ditch the brown horse lifted his head again, and again looked longingly toward the timber. Again Linn began to stroke the rumpled coat. Slowly he arrived at a new decision.

"Brownie, it was a fair fight and you won," he repeated. "I'll be darned if I'll shoot you. Lew, he thinks you are a bad 'un. But I know better. And I know you'll never live through another winter. So I'm going to give you a chance to die like a gentleman. Some folks might think it would be more humane to shoot you. We know better, don't we, Brownie? And Lew, he's lying back there with one ear cocked up waiting for me to shoot you. He'll rest easier when he thinks you are out of the way."

Linn tied the horse to a scrub juniper and went back a little distance toward the house and fired a solitary shot.

"Now, old fellow," he said when he returned, "I'm going to take you up to the drift fence at the edge of the timber and turn you back on your own range. But you'll have to carry me. I'll be darned if I'll walk that far even for you." He rested his arm across the horse's back for a moment; then slowly, cautiously, first resting his weight on the withers, he lifted himself up and swung his leg across the brown back. There followed a sudden tensing of muscles.

"Brownie!" he said sharply. Slowly the horse re-

laxed and took a step forward. Then another step. Then he seemed instinctively to understand what was expected of him and began moving up toward the timber, his head held high and proudly, walking with the smooth, springy step that had caused men to covet him in his younger days.

When they reached the drift fence Linn dismounted and opened the high wire gate and led the horse inside. Then he removed the hackamore and held out his hand.

"Good-by, old fellow," he said. "And stay hidden."

The old brown outlaw nuzzled his hand for a moment; then moved off a few steps; paused once and lifted his head and whinnied; then whirled and raced away under the trees.

A FOOL ABOUT 'A HORSE

BY

ROSS SANTEE

"A FOOL ABOUT A HORSE" is one of the tales in Ross Santee's "Men and Horses," a book from which it might well be deduced that it was Mr. Santee—and not James Whitcomb Riley—who composed the verse:

*I love the horse from hoof to head,
From head to hoof and tail to mane;
I love the horse, as I have said,
From head to hoof and back again.*

A FOOL ABOUT A HORSE¹

THERE'S no tellin' when you'll meet up with a cow-puncher. They're such a driftin' lot. You'll work with one for months sometimes, sleepin' in the same bed. Then some mornin' he'll pull out. Mebbe you'll see him again and mebbe you won't.

Steve always was a queer cuss, an' a fool about a horse. When I first met up with Steve he was breakin' horses for the Cross S outfit in Arizona. Most peelers is pretty rough on a horse, but Steve was different. He could teach a young horse most anything without half killin' him. Most of the horses in Steve's string was rank poison. But there was one little gray bronc in the bunch he called Three T.

Three T was gentle as a kitten, an' Steve taught him to do most everything 'cept talk. Three T wouldn't run with the rest of the horses. He hung around camp just like a dog. He nearly run Slim, the horse-wrangler, crazy at first tryin' to herd him. After the ponies quieted down in the mornin' Slim always went back to camp to auger the cook. But he wouldn't any more'n get off his horse an' there'd be Three T trailin' along after him. Slim would take him back out to the remuda, an' as long as he was in sight the little gray would graze quiet. But the

¹ From "Men and Horses." Copyright, 1926, by Ross Santee. Published by The Century Company.

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minute Slim pulled out for camp there'd be Three T right at his heels.

All this wasn't settin' well with Slim, for he liked his coffee between meals. He decides to run the little gray off, but it's no use. In an hour Three T's back at camp hangin' around just like a dog. Slim quit botherin' him after that, and, since none of the rest of the horses was any trouble to speak of, Slim spends most of his time in camp augerin' Old Sour Dough, the cook, and filling his paunch full of coffee and cold steak. An' when the outfit's in camp, Steve's always a-foolin' with that little gray bronc, teachin' him to shake hands an' other such foolishness, an' a-feedin' him biscuits and sich until the little gray got to be a plumb nuisance.

We were eatin' supper one night when the blow-off comes. The punchers is all settin' around on their heels stowin' away the grub. Three T's standin' just outside the circle waitin' for a biscuit, an' Old Sour Dough's leanin' on the gonch hook airin' his paunch about the war. Nobody else is sayin' much, for it's a tender subject in this outfit. Most of the punchers is expectin' their call 'most any time, an' the idea of crossin' all that water ain't settin' well with none of them. Unless it's Steve, an' he's so quiet an' easy-goin' not even water makes much difference to him.

Old Sour Dough's right in the middle of tellin' what he'd do if he wasn't too old to be drafted, when the little gray bronc eases up behind him and takes a biscuit out of one of the Dutch ovens. Old Sour Dough's so interested in his own game he don't even know

what's goin' on. Finally Dogie Si snickered and Old Sour Dough turns round in time to see Three T standin' over the empty oven, with his nose out beggin' for more. Everybody laughed—everybody except the cook. He swings on the little gray with the gonch hook catchin' him just back of the ear. Three T's legs sort of buckled under him, an' down he goest to his knees.

I looked at Steve. His face had gone a chalky white, an' he was makin' a queer noise in his throat. Old Sour Dough swung the gonch hook again—but it never landed. . . .

It wasn't much of a fight. Old Sour Dough's unconscious an' Steve's still makin' that queer noise in his throat when we finally pulled him off. Me an' the horse-wrangler washed the dishes an' sort of straightened up the camp. We're just finishin' up when Dogie Si come back from the cook's bunk an' said Old Sour Dough had finally come to. I looked around for Steve, figurin' maybe he's dragged it. But there he was foolin' with that little bronc again, just as if nothin' 'd ever happened. We're eatin' supper not more 'n a week later when an Indian rides into camp. He's come from headquarters with a note from the boss and Steve's notice to report in town.

It was sundown when Steve pulled out. At the top of the ridge he set the little gray up an' looked back for a minute. Then he waved his hand an' was gone.

The saloon is plumb full of people when I goes in. There's a few Mexicans an' punchers scattered through

the crowd, but most of the mob is tourists, an' they're swarmin' around the bar like a bunch of magpies. Down near the end of the bar I finally get close enough to get a foot on the rail. I got a forty-dollar thirst, but when the Mexican barkeep slides me a drink I sort of hesitate. I'm studyin' whether to take it out back some place an' drink it, when somebody pokes me in the ribs. I never did feel comfortable in Juarez without a gun, so I whirls around expectin' most anything. An' if there ain't Steve!

"Bill Jones," says he, with a grin!

The first thing Steve asks about is that little gray bronc. I'd plumb forgot the little gray, for the outfit shipped some horses to Texas not more'n a month after Steve left, Three T goin' along with the bunch. But when I tells Steve he don't say nothin'.

"Here's how!" says I when the Mexican barkeep fills 'em up again.

"How!" says Steve.

It's awful good to see Steve. I don't know what makes it, but you get to know a man better in a week out on the range than you will in a year's time in town.

"Heard you was killed in France."

"No," says Steve, "it was in the laig."

"How'd you like the army, anyway?"

Steve shakes his head.

"I done everything they told me, but I didn't do nothin' else. I finally got hit in the laig. I was in the hospital when the armistice was signed. Breakin'

horses since I got out—New Mexico—come to Juarez to get drunk.”

Coming from Steve, this is a heap of talk. Everybody’s leavin’ the saloon, an’ from a tourist I finally gathers there’s a bull-fight that afternoon; so me an’ Steve has a few more drinks an’ throws in with the crowd.

The place was pretty crowded, but we finally found a couple of seats on the shady side of the ring. Outside the entrance the band’s playin’. About half the crowd’s American tourists, I’d say from the looks of their clothes. There’s one settin’ ’longside of me an’ Steve that said he was from New York. He wasn’t a bad sort at that, in spite of the white suit he’s wearin’. Steve bought some bottled beer, an’ the tourist give me a program. It’s printed in Spanish though, an’ don’t mean nothin’ to me. We’re startin’ on our second bottle when some *hombre* blew a bugle. There’s a hullabaloo at the entrance an’ a bunch of soldiers marched in. I thought for a minute there’s another revolution, for they’re all carrying long rifles, and none of ’em’s wearin’ much except cartridges. The crowd don’t pay ’em any mind though, so I eases back into my seat.

The *hombre* blew his bugle again, an’ the bull-fighters entered the ring.

A bunch on foot come first, carryin’ red capes. Just behin’ ’em comes a bunch that’s mounted. “Picadors,” the tourist calls ’em. They’re wearin’ different clothes an’ the horses they’re ridin’ look like they’d been dead for a week. Next comes a team of horses. The

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hombre cut down on his bugle again. The team was driven out, the bull-fighters took their places about the ring.

Another gate swung open an' the bull busts into the ring. He's pretty snuffy, an' the sight of them red capes soon gets him on the prod. They teased him around a while, when all of a sudden he sees one of the horses. I think it's queer the horse don't dodge, an' then I see he's blindfolded. I ain't finicky, but it makes me kind of sick when the horse goes down. The rider ain't hurt, but there's blood a-pourin' from the horse's neck an' shoulders. The pony's tryin' to get his feet when the bull charges again. The Mexicans is all on their feet, screaming. Steve's a-makin' that queer noise in his throat, an' the tourist is cryin' like a baby. An *hombre* just below me threw his hat in the ring. I'm for kickin' him into the ring after it, when Steve an' the tourist pull me down.

They finally killed the bull. The matador, Formalito they called him, did about as poor a piece of butcherin' as I've ever seen. The bull don't even notice the red capes now.

He's standin' in the center of the ring, blood pouring from his mouth. As the matador approached him the bull turned slowly away. A dozen times the matador faced him, but the bull is too weak to charge. Finally he runs his sword in the bull's neck. Stumblin' blindly to the edge of the ring, the bull sank slowly to his knees, blood pourin' from his mouth.

Steve and the tourist is for leavin', but there's three bulls to be killed, an' I ain't given up hope of seein'

a Mexican killed. We finally compromise. An' I promise to go with 'em after the next bull's killed if they don't kill a Mexican in the meantime.

We'd opened some more beer when the Mexicans took their places again. I ain't payin' much attention to anything except the beer, when I notice one of the horses.

He's nothin' but skin an' bones, but there's some-thin' awful familiar to me in the way he moves around. I looked at Steve; his face had gone a chalky white, an' he's makin' that queer noise in his throat. Then I knew. I don't remember much that happened after that. Steve's down in the bull-ring an' has the picador by the throat before any one knew what happened. Then all hell broke loose. There's a dozen Mexicans a-tryin' to drag Steve off that picador when I got to him. I broke a bottle over an *hombre's* head that had Steve by the hair, and then the whole remuda run over me, an' I went to sleep. . . .

My head's a-splittin' when I woke up, but it don't take me long to figure out where I am. There's bars across the windows an' a bullet-headed *hombre* with a long rifle, standin' just outside the door. Steve ain't there. Must 'a' killed him, I figure, but my head's a-spinnin', so I go to sleep again.

Sounds like the tourist's voice, but I'm afraid to look at first, for fear I'm hearin' things. But sure enough, it is.

"How's Steve?"

"All right," he says, an' sorta smiles an' 'introduces me to some lawyer friend of his.

We stopped an' had a drink, an' then he heads the car for home. I can't get no information out of either of 'em. They both looks wise an' sorta smiles at everything I says. It's an awful relief to me when we gets back across the bridge. El Paso never looked so good before. The lawyer finally stopped the car.

"My place," he says, an' asks me if I'll have a look around.

"What about Steve?"

"Oh, he's all right," he says, an' heads me for the bar.

Steve sorta grinned when we come in, an' then went on a-foolin' with the little gray.

He always was a queer cuss, an' a fool about a horse.

THE BREAKING

BY

ALFRED OLLIVANT

"THE BREAKING" is a chapter in the history of that celebrated span, Boxer and Beauty. In his simple account of the rugged pride of Gallops, Alfred Ollivant's power is nowhere more evident—save, perhaps, in his heroic yarn, "Bob, Son of Battle."

THE BREAKING¹

YOUNG cart-horses are first broken to the service of man at two years old, usually in the spring or early summer at the slack time before haying begins.

The breaking on a farm such as Gallops is a rough and ready job. There is more in it of brutality than finesse. Time is of the essence of the matter: for labor is always short, and every job done means another job, often as important, left undone.

On Gallops it involved less violence than on most farms. That was because of Young Will. Every youngster broken to bit and harness was broken by him, and had been ever since he first took on the job of horseman as quite a lad. In his own department Young Will reigned an absolute despot. There not even George dared interfere.

Will began on Boxer and Beauty as he began on all the rest. One late spring evening, with the thrushes shouting in the elms, after his day's work was done, he strolled into the Croft and called softly, seductively. The two young things came to him slowly across the shadows. Boxer as always leading, with outstretched muzzle and soft beard, pretending to be coy. In Young Will's huge pockets were hunks of the beloved cow-cake. They smelt it at once, and Boxer began to burrow and fumble for it. Beauty of course must go

¹ From "Boxer and Beauty," by Alfred Ollivant. Published by Doubleday, Page & Company.

for the pocket Boxer was already investigating, and suffer brutal rebuff accordingly. As Boxer nosed, Will handled his head and ears, talking softly the while. The colt was too deeply engaged treasure-hunting to resent the treatment. Will now took out the cow-cake and gave it to the youngsters. As they munched he threw his arm over Boxer's neck like a collar, and then dropped it over the young horse's back with the quiet thump of a harness-saddle descending. Boxer took it all patiently enough.

Young Will passed ten minutes with his pupils thus every evening for a week. And every evening after the lesson, as he returned to the yard, they followed him doubtfully and stood awhile with their heads over the gate that shut them off from the forbidden land within which they saw young Bouncer, moving like a lord, and other casual acquaintances of the Croft.

This was a favorite position of theirs and encouraged by Young Will. From there they watched the business of the great yard that some day they would share, and grew used to it: horses ready-harnessed and clanking out of the stables, Bouncer, a year their senior giving himself the airs of a veteran teamster, the come-and-go of the great drays, the rattling of milk-cans, the bull-floats, the rakes, the binders.

"Learns 'em to like it," Young Will told Esther Thorp, who had come up with her governess to pay the milk-bill.

A week later, as he was tramping through Birkby Whin at the head of a three-horse dray, he passed the

girl swinging long-legged on the vicarage gate, and paused.

"I begins 'em to-morrow," he told her briefly.

She slid to the ground.

"What?" she asked keenly.

"Box' and Beaut'," he answered. "Schoolin' 'em."

"Where?"

"The Croft. Five o'clock."

She was too shy to ask for an invitation; but her eagerness was obvious.

"Like to coom?" he asked somberly at last.

"May I?"

Will nodded.

"Best not bring *her*, I reckon. Might scarify 'em like—Bo' especially." It was unnecessary to specify to whom the *her* referred.

"She's gone," Esther replied eagerly. "It's holidays. I'm free, thank goodness."

Will grinned.

"All right," he said, and marched off after his team, long whip on shoulder.

Next afternoon the girl turned up at Gallops punctually to the minute. Mrs. Lord, who was as fond of Esther as she was of any human being, apart from her Old William and his George, gave her tea and barm-cakes, for which Gallops was famous, especially made for her visitors, with a superfluity of currants.

"Goin' horse-breakin', aren't you?" she said with the surly ungraciousness that was the nearest approach to good manners she could manage—"Yo' and Young Will?"

"I hope so."

"What's moother say?" not unkindly.

Esther laughed gaily.

"Mother did it herself when she was my age!"

It was never from mother that Esther's difficulties came.

Just then Will came by the open window with two halters and a long cart-whip. He caught the girl's eye and jerked his head. Esther rose up and followed him out into the Croft. There were Boxer and Beauty standing together as always under an elm, Beauty, her nose over Boxer's withers; and old mare Esmeralda a little apart.

Young Will strode towards them, the girl at his side. They did not speak. Few words, indeed, ever passed between them. They seemed to understand each other without speech, like animals. Young Will's attitude towards the girl was much the same, in fact, as towards his horses.

"Box' first," he now said. "Beaut's all right. She'll follow him anywhere."

He gave the girl the long cart-whip and one of the halters. Then he stood still and called.

"They know you," he said. "They'll coom."

And come they did. Will without more ado slipped a halter over Boxer's head. The young horse made no trouble. To the halter a rope was attached. Will pulled on it, trying to induce Boxer to follow. But Boxer wouldn't. The unusual restraint annoyed him. Young Will, rope in hand, went in front and called. Boxer only shook his bearded head. Will leaned gently

on the rope: so did Boxer. His nose came out, his neck extended, till the two were in a straight line; but his bulky young body remained obdurate. With his muzzle out and his forelegs planted he looked supremely silly and dogged.

Esther chuckled.

Young Will relaxed his pull, and turned his sweet wise eyes, full of humor, on the girl.

"Balks," he said.

Unhitching the rope, but leaving the halter on, he walked away, calling. After a little deliberation Boxer followed him, and Beauty followed Boxer.

Esther gave a little skip of delight.

"How like us!" she cried.

"Yes," said Will deliberately. "But which is it? Doos they take after us or us after they?"

The girl pondered deeply.

"I don't think either. I think we both take after a Third." She didn't quite know what she meant herself; but she thought she meant something. Anyway it was beyond Will; who did not attempt to follow up her idea.

Attaching the rope once more, he pulled again—with the same result.

"What shall you do now?" asked Esther.

"Force him to it," replied her companion briefly.

"Nothing for it only that."

Esther came of a liberal home and was brimming with the ideas, educational and Montessorian, at that time paramount.

"Pity," she said gravely.

"'Tis," Young Will admitted with equal solemnity. "Only got to be. See, there's a long way and a short way. Long way's best, but short way's shortest. I likes t'long way, I does. But Gallops got to goo on, as Dad says. And if you're drove to short way, then it's force 'em to it—same as in a class in school. If yo've nobbut one scholar happen you can take and coax him, and spend all day at it if needs be. But if yo've fifty yo' canna. So farmers got to force, where gentry can coax. Coom down to cash in the end. Most always doos in ma notion on it."

He called to the men in the yard. Two or three of them, who had been watching over the gate, came grinning. This was a bit of sport for them, much enjoyed, and relieving the monotony of hum-drum toil. They got on to the rope.

"Now for a tug o' war!" said Young Will, and took first place on the rope, facing Boxer.

That was the post of danger. If when he said the word and the men leaned on the rope, the young horse gave way and came with a bull-rush, the first man might be trampled. Young Will had no fear. He knew from long experience that young cart-horses, clumsy though they may appear, are as delicate in their treading as thoroughbreds, and will avoid trampling a man who is down at almost any cost. In all his experience he had known but one accident and that to Long Clayton, whose feet, as Will truly pointed out at the time, "yo' could scarce help treadin' on if yo' was in the same field wi' him."

"Steady!" said Will. "Now—pull."

The men behind him bore their weight on the rope, increasing their pull gently, heels in, backs slanted. Young Boxer thought it was a game. He dug his toes in and sat back. As the men straightened out, so did he. Will whistled.

"Coop, ma' lad!" he called cheerily.

Boxer's ears went forward, but his body back.

Young Will nodded to Esther.

"Crack t' whip!"

The girl cracked it most effectively. Boxer leapt as though stung: the rope gave: the men staggered back: Boxer was under way before he knew it.

"Now run away wi' it!" called Will.

Boxer saw the kind face backing rapidly away before him, and heard the familiar voice encouraging him. He followed reluctantly. Then he found it less trouble not to resist, and came along ungraciously, indeed, but without a fight.

Young Will left the rope, went to the colt's head, and made much of him as he followed the men suspiciously about the field.

Then Young Will was aware of another haltered head at his side. It was Beauty. Esther had slipped the halter on her head unbidden and was leading her.

Young Will looked at the long girl with quiet approval. She was like a foal herself, he thought.

"Well done," he said laconically.

"It wasn't difficult," Esther replied.

LOREINE: A HORSE

BY

ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

IN the welter of modern poets, Ficke remains a serene and delightful figure. "Loreine," which appeared originally in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, is the creation of an artist thoroughly conversant with his materials. In its simplicity, economy of structure, and sharp lyric quality, it is one of the finest tributes of its kind in the language.

LOREINE: A HORSE

SHE lifted up her head
With the proud incredible poise
Of beauty recovered
From the Mycenæan tombs.

She opened her nostrils
With the wild arrogance
Of life that knows nothing
Except that it is life.

Her slender legs
Quivered above the soft grass.
Her hard hooves
Danced among the dandelions.

Her great dark eyes
Saw all that could be seen.
Her large lips
Plucked at my coat-sleeve.

All the wisdom of the prophets
Vanished into laughter
As Loreine lifted her small foot
And pawed the air.

All the learning of the sages
Turned to ribald rubrics
When that proud head
Looked at a passing cloud.

And so, amid this godless
God-hungry generation
Let us, my friends, take Loreine
And worship her.

She would demand nothing,
Nor would she utter thunders.
She is living, and real,
And she is beautiful.

CORKRAN OF THE CLAMSTRETCH

BY

JOHN BIGGS, JR.

LAMENTABLY, the demands of the legal profession allow John Biggs but small opportunity to consider those of literature. His limited production, however, is graced by a uniform excellence. "Corkran of the Clamstretch" is proof of a talent uncommon among the younger writers of to-day.

CORKRAN OF THE CLAMSTRETCH ¹

THIS is a record of genius. I saw him for the first time as he lay beneath an apple-tree, endeavoring by muscular twitchings of his upper lip to grab an apple which lay just beyond the reach of his long black nose. Indisputably it was a game which he played, and he ordered it by set rules of his own devising. It was fundamental that he could not move his body, but he might crane or stretch his neck to any impossible posture. I climbed the paddock fence, and moved the apple an inch toward him. He looked at me reproachfully, but seized it none the less, and devouring it with a single crunching bite, rose to his feet, and proceeded inscrutably to stare.

He was a dumpy little horse, resembling a small fat business man, and as soon to be suspected of immortal speed as a stock-broker of a sonnet. His torso was a rotund little barrel. From this his legs, heavy and muscular, stuck out at odd angles. A lean neck rose from the mass, and upon this was plastered a head, many sizes too large, which looked as if it had been thrown at him from a distance and had inadvertently stuck.

His gaze mellowed and he regarded me more leniently. A faint smile began to wreath his lips; the smile expanded to a soundless tittering. At last, in looking at me, he fairly laughed. This I considered

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impolite and told him so. He listened courteously, but made no comment other than raising a quizzical hoof. He walked around me and looked carefully at my reverse side. This satisfied him. He returned to the apple-tree, yawned broadly, and lay down. Richard Thomas Corkran was at rest.

Tentatively I offered him apples, but his ennui was not to be dispelled. Finally, he slept the sleep of a good and honest horse. I retired to the fence lest I disturb the sacred slumbers.

Genius is an unutterable thing. It is a spark flying from no visible flame. It is an excitement of the soul; it is a terrific motivation. It is a vapor that splits the rock of reality.

Richard Thomas Corkran was a strange rhapsody of speed. He was without circumstance, without explanation. No great family had crossed a bar sinister upon his unknown escutcheon. His fathers were indistinguishable clods of work. At the time of his first race his sides were galled from plough harness. Literally he was self-made.

He was possessed of an iron will and intelligence. Consummately he understood his metier; never did his greatness overwhelm him. He remained unmoved, his attitude the epitome of a successful business. Yet he was capable of a cold and dignified fury. Always was it merited, but he worked himself to it, for he had found it to be an efficient symbol. A balanced quietness was his attitude upon the track, and from it he never deviated. He raced without the slightest enthusiasm or excitement. Icy imperturbability marked

his technique—an imperturbability that was unaffected. From the tips of his tiny hoofs to his absurd head he was polite, both to his rivals, whom he scorned, and to his attendants, whom he considered unworthy of notice, and this politeness proceeded from his conscious known superiority.

One thing of all things aroused his wrath, hot and sincere. He considered himself a free agent, and any molestation of this right caused anger to boil within him. The hours of his business were those which he spent upon the track; at all other times he came and went as he pleased. He would permit no officious infringement upon his leisure. As to his racing it was indomitably his own. He considered all human aid simply coöperation. If it became direction, no matter how tactfully suggested, he was done. He would not move a hoof toward the track's end. In his maiden race, a whip had been laid, solely as an incentive, upon his muscular little thighs. Richard Thomas Corkran had slid to a stop with stiffened fore feet, and, without heat or expression, but with icy malevolence, had kicked his sulky to fragments of wood and steel. Thereafter his driver, by iron order, sat braced to the sulky, and with loose reins simply fulfilled the requirements of rule. The race and the trotting of it were solely Richard Thomas Corkran's.

It was five o'clock when they came to arouse him, and this partook of a stately, ordered ceremony. There were five men in all, and I presume that he would not have deigned to rise for less. Down the field in careful formation they advanced. First came the head

trainer, magnificently unencumbered by blanket, sponge, or currycomb, the veritable master of the bed-chamber, and flanking him, his subalterns, two graceful yellow boys—this touch exotic—carrying combs and skin-brushes; next came two buckets, marked with the white initials *R. T. C.*, and then his *own* blanket, plaid-striped, refulgent, the one slight vulgarity necessary to all genius. Last of all was a small white dog, like an animated wash-rag, propelling itself forward with staccato bounds and barks.

The process halted; the dog continued forward, and barked malevolently in the ear of recumbent greatness, which responded with a slow opening of its left eye. The long thin neck rose from the ground at a right angle, and surveyed the halted host. Richard Thomas Corkran got to his feet and shook his rotund little body. He stood waiting.

As they combed and brushed him, he moved no muscle, but placidly chewed a succession of straws that hung pendulous from his lower lip. It was a gesture nonchalant. At length his black coat was sleeked and glossed. The head trainer stepped forward and felt his chest, his hocks, and pasterns. This he endured with kindness, and, inspection over, trotted toward the watering-trough, preceded, however, by the white dog. Pleasurably he played with the water, drinking but little. He blew through his nostrils, causing white bubbles to rise and burst through the turmoil of the surface. The light, finely made racing harness was then put upon him, and adjusted perfectly to each of his expanding muscles, and last the blanket,

strapped and belted, making him look like a fat, plaid-cowled monk. The gate was now opened, and he walked gravely from the paddock. Behind him streamed his acolytes in meek procession. Heralding him was the woolly dog. Last was his sulky, wheeled by a negro boy. Past the judge's house he plodded, and I saw the old jurist rise from the porch to greet him.

The discovery of Richard Thomas Corkran, and his relation to Judge Coleman, a famous county story, deserves record.

At dusk one summer evening Judge Coleman, exercising a favorite mare, herself of note, had, on the Clamstretch, come upon the son of a neighboring farmer, atop the height of an old-fashioned racing sulky, a wooden affair with high shaking wheels. Beneath this relic, for the sulky juttet out almost over his rump, careened an odd little horse, looking in the darkness, so says the judge, like a small, black mouse.

"I'll race you, Tommy," said the judge jokingly to the boy.

"Done," was the reply, and the little horse moved up to the mare's nose.

"Take a handicap, Tommy," said the judge, amused by the boy's confidence.

"*You* take the handicap, judge," said the boy, and the judge, fearful of hurting the boy's feelings, walked his mare some ten yards to the front.

"*Now!*" shouted the boy, and the judge heard with amazement the strong, unbelievably quick beat of the

little horse's hoofs as he struck to his stride through the white dust of the road. Past the striving mare he went as if she were haltered to the ground. Three times was this astounding performance repeated, while the straining nostrils of the mare grew red with effort.

The judge pulled to the side of the road.

"What do you use that horse for!" he asked.

"For ploughin'," replied the boy, and he was near tears with pride and rage. "I have to use him for ploughin'."

"What do you call him?" went on the judge.

"Richard Thomas Corkran," replied the boy. "After grandpop."

Then and there, for an adequate price, Richard Thomas Corkran changed hands, and the judge that night examining him by the light of a stable-lantern discovered the marks of plough-galls upon his flanks.

No attempt was made to teach R. T. C. to race; none was ever needed. When the time came for a race he plodded to the track, and from thence to the starting-point, and thereafter at some time favorable to himself he commenced to trot. No agitation of spectators or contesting horses, no jockeying of drivers, might shake his icy imperturbability, his utter calm. The race done and won, he returned at a walk to his paddock. In two years upon the Grand Circuit he had never missed a meeting nor ever lost a race.

With something of awe I watched him as he passed between the high stone posts of the judge's entrance gate and entered the Clamstretch.

This road is a long white ribbon which runs from

the Porter Ferry to the hills. Its crown is covered with clam-shells beaten to a soft imponderable dust, and from this it is known as the Clamstretch. It is agreed by county racing authorities that from the centre of the ferry-gate to the old Weldin Oak is a perfect half-mile, and a horse that covers this distance under two minutes is worthy of notice. Richard Thomas Corkran, when the humor was upon him, had trotted the exact half-mile in one minute and five seconds.

It is a county saying that colts the day they are born are instructed by their mother mares in the trotting of the Clamstretch.

Beneath the old Weldin Oak and lining the road are rough wooden benches, and before them the ground has been worn bare and hard by many feet. At the side of the road sways a decrepit whitewashed stand, as high as a man's chest, and with two cracker-boxes for steps. This is the official stand of the judge of the course when such a formality is necessary.

The customs of the Clamstretch have grown up with time, and are as unbending as bronze. It is decreed that Judge Coleman shall be the ruling authority of the meeting, that the time of trotting shall be from twilight to darkness, and that there shall be as much racing as the light permits.

First the horsemen gather and solemnly trot practice heats, each driver carefully keeping his animal from showing its true worth, though the exact record of each is known to all. Then, with stable boys at the horses' heads, they collect in little groups about the oak, and with tobacco, portentous silences, and great

gravity lay careful bets. But with the entrance of the judge comes drama.

He minces across the bare space before the oak and nods gravely to each friend. From an interior pocket of his immaculate gray coat he draws a small black book, the official record of the Clamstretch. In this book he enters the contesting horses, the names of the owners, and the bets. This finished, the four horsemen selected for the first race pass to the road, briefly inspect their gear, climb to the sulkies, sit magnificently upon the outstretched tails of their horses, and with whips at point, drive slowly toward the gate of the ferry lodge.

The noise of the hoofs dies to abrupt silence as the contestants jockey for position at the start, broken by the sudden thunder of the race. Puffs of white dust, hanging low over the road, rise beneath the drumming hoofs; strained red nostrils flash across the finish. Comes the stentorian voice of the announcer, giving the winner and the time. Gradually the soft light fades; the last race is ended; the judge bids the company a grave good night, and the red point of his cigar disappears in the gloom of the meadow.

There are many names great in the history of racing, whose owners have trotted the broad white road and have been duly inscribed in the black book. From Barnett and Barnetta B., from Almanzer and the Bohemia Girl, forever from R. T. C., the time of the Clamstretch is set, and it is a point of honor between horse and man that when a great king falls he is brought back to trot his last from the lodge gate to the

Weldin Oak. From Clamstretch to Clamstretch, is the saying.

I have often witnessed the custom of the Clamstretch, and this time I entered upon it inconspicuously in the magnificent wake of Richard Thomas Corkran. Upon the bare meadow, around the old oak as a nucleus, were gathered many horses. A wild roan mare led the group, a young, untried creature, who kicked and squealed in a nervousness that turned from sudden anger to helpless quaking. A negro at her head, a shining black hand upon her bit, soothed and quieted her with honey upon his tongue and a sturdy desire to thump her in his heart. Her owner, a bewhiskered farmer, stood just beyond the range of her flying heels and looked at her with dismay.

"Now, pettie," he kept saying. "Now, pettie, that ain't no way to behave. That ain't no way."

A hilarious group of friends, in a half-circle behind him, ridiculed his attempts at reconciliation.

"She ain't your pettie," they shouted. "She's some other feller's. . . . Maybe she ain't got none at all. . . . Give her hell, Jim. . . . Soft stuff's no dope."

A large horse, piebald and pretty, looking as if he had been purchased in a toy store, stood next to the virago. Her nervousness was apparently communicated to him, for occasionally he would back and rear. At these times, he raised clouds of dust, which sifted gently over the field, causing a shiver to run down the line of waiting horses.

"Keep 'em horses still," shouted the negro boys. "Hold onto 'em."

One giant black, a colossal hand upon the muzzle of his horse, a mare as dainty and graceful as a fawn, threw out his great chest with pride.

"My lady's a lady," he crooned softly as the other horses stamped and grew restive. "My lady's a lady." The pretty creature looked at him with wide brown eyes, and shook her head as if softly denying.

An animal at the end of the line held my attention. His hide was the color of running bronze. His head might have been struck for one of the horses of Time, the nostrils flaring and intense, the eyes wild with hint of action. He looked as if he might run with the whirlwind, be bitted to a comet's orbit, and triumph. Sacrilege, it seemed, when I learned that he had never won a race, was quite lacking in the heart that creates a great horse. In him nature was superbly bluffing.

Richard Thomas Corkran stood at some distance from the rank and file. Boredom was unutterably upon him. He seemed looking for a place to lie down and continue his interrupted slumbers, and to be restrained only by the fear that he might be considered *gauche*. Truly there was nothing in which he might be honestly interested. No horse present could give him even the beginnings of a race. His heaviest work had been done upon the grand circuit in the spring and early summer. Vacation and leisure possessed him for this day at least. True, upon the next day he was to trot a race which was, perhaps, the most important of his career. Now, through the courtesy of the judge, he was the *pièce de résistance*, the staple, of the evening. At the end of the racing he would trot a heat in solitary grandeur—

one heat, not more, and this heat would be preparation for to-morrow's test. Two horses, strategically placed over the straight half-mile, would pace him, but they would have as little to do with his trotting as the distance posts upon the track. A little knot of men, gaping and solemn, had already gathered about him, interpreting his every bored motion as proof positive of his phenomenal speed. He accepted this as his due and was in no manner affected by it.

The men, as always, interested me. A few were professional horsemen, so marked and moulded. They were calm persons, who spoke without gesture or facial expression. Thought flowed soundlessly behind their shrewd eyes. Their attitude was one of continual weighing and balancing of mighty points.

The rest were prosperous farmers, country gentlemen, or honest artisans from the near-by village, all pleasure-bent. The regalia of those who were to drive, or hoped to drive, was unique. They seemed to express their personalities best through high black boots, striped trousers, and flaming calico shirts. The climacteric pinnacle was usually reached with an inherited racing-cap, scarlet, ochre, brown, yellow, plaid.

Twilight cupped the world, seeming to grant a hush to earth. The road took on new whiteness, the meadows gradually darkening, touched by the night and the brooding quietness that comes as the sun goes down.

The first race came to a close—a torrent of young horses. The wild-eyed virago was among them, and she won by a prodigious stretching of the neck. Thereat, totally unable to withstand triumph, she bucked and

squealed, dragging her sulky, that tormenting appendage, behind her.

"Shure, it's temperamental she is," said a Scotch-Irish farmer standing beside me. "But she might have walked in on her hands and won."

The spectacle was dramatic. There was a flurry of horse and man as a race was called, a rushing to the track's edge by the spectators, a happy bustling of self-important officials. From the knots of excited humanity emerged the horses, the drivers with their whips at trail beneath their elbows, their eyes self-consciously upon the ground. Slender sulkies, gossamer-wheeled, were pulled out, tested by heavy thumpings, and attached. Carefully the reins were bitted, run back through the guide-rings, and the drivers swung themselves up. The final touch was the arranging of the horse's tail, and here technique differed. A good driver must sit upon his horse's tail. This is beyond question. The mooted point is whether he shall do so spread or flat. Authority as usual holds both sides, Richard Thomas Corkran absolutely dissenting, for he would allow no one to sit on his tail but himself.

The horses dwindle to specks upon the long white road. The sound of the hoofs dies to faint pulsing in the ears, a shadow of sound. Silence follows, breathless, expectant, broken by the clarion of the start.

The rhythm becomes a rhapsody of pounding hoofs, quick-timed, staccato. A black swirl up the road falls to detail of straining bodies. A roar crescendoes to high shreds of sound as they flash across the finish. A second of tense silence—pandemonium.

Three races of three heats each were trotted. Darkness was drifting down upon us as the last was finished, and Richard Thomas Corkran walked out upon the track.

His small black body blent with the semi-darkness, rendering him almost indistinguishable. The crowd followed him across the track. There was no preparation, no ceremony. The small figure plodded into the graying distance. His pace was scarcely above a walk. He might have been a plough-horse returning from a day of labor. The spectators drew back to the road's edge.

The twilight deepened. We waited in silence. A faint drum of hoofs sounded down the wind. Sharper, swifter, it grew, a black line split the darkness, lengthening so quickly as to vanquish eyesight. There was an incredible twinkling of legs as he passed me, a glimpse of square-set methodical shoulders, which moved with the drive of pistons, of a free floating tail spread to the rushing scythe of air. He finished.

Carefully he stopped, not too sharply lest he strain himself. He turned and plodded toward the oak, where hung his blanket, and as its folds fell upon him he returned to peaceful contemplation.

Came the voice of the announcer, a hoarse bellow through the gloom—"Ti-i-ime by the ha-a-alf. Ooone—five—an'—two—fi-i-ifts!!" A roar of applause broke to scattered clapping. Relaxation from the tension expressed itself in laughter, jest, and play. The crowd prepared to go home. The Clamstretch was for that day done.

After dinner Judge Coleman, whose guest I was, and myself walked down the close-cropped green to the paddock fence. A moon had risen, bathing the land in clear pale yellow. Within the paddock and beneath his apple-tree lay Richard Thomas Corkran. He rested upon his side, his small torso rising and falling gently with the even flow of his breath. From his upper lip protruded a straw which moved gently as the air was expelled from his nostrils. Untroubled by thoughts of to-morrow's race, he was again sound asleep.

The next morning I saw him leave his paddock for the fair grounds. A large truck, whose side just disclosed the upper edge of his rotund, barrelled little body, held him, his three attendants, and his staccato, white and woolly dog. His placid eye fell upon me as he passed, and I saluted and followed him.

The site of the State Fair was a great fenced field upon the outskirts of a near-by city. Upon one side towered a huge grand stand, facing a broad and dusty half-mile track. In the gigantic oval, thus formed, was a smaller ring, tan-barked and barricaded, used at times as a horse-show ring, across a corner of which was now built a small, precarious wooden platform, where vaudeville teams disported themselves in a bedlam of sound for the free edification of the multitude.

On the outside of the oval of track, stretched the Midway, in parlance "Mighty," a herd of tents and rough-board shacks, a staggering line, running to a quiet negro graveyard, overgrown with yellow grass and flecked with the gray of forgotten tombstones.

Toward the city in larger tents and squat, unsided

buildings, were the farming exhibits, and between these and the outer road the racing stables, flanking a hard-beaten square, in whose centre leaned a rusty pump, dry for years, and used as a hitching-post. Beyond, in a multiplicity of stalls and sties and bins, uncovered to the air, were huge and blooded bulls, monster hogs, and high-crowing, cackling fowl.

Over the wide field hung a haze of dust that stung the nostrils and soaked into the skin, causing a gray change.

I entered through a choked gate into which people streamed as a river banks against a bulwark, a confusion of carriages and cars, walking women with toddling children, red and blue balloons swaying between the ground and the gate-posts, flying bits of straw and dust, howling hawkers: a high-pitched excitation of mob.

As I passed through the wooden arch came the sleek backs of racing-horses, surging toward the eight's posts, and the wild foreground of waving arms as the spectators beat against the rail.

The crowd was a sluggish, slow-moving monster, that proceeded with sudden aimless stoppings. It was impossible to change or alter its spasmodic pace. It rippled into every corner of the field; it ran over fences and beat down barricades. It possessed an attribute of quicksilver in that it could never be gathered or held.

Its sound was a great crushing. It winnowed the grass beneath its feet, and the beaten odor came freshly to my nostrils. It surged over itself and spun

slowly back. It never seemed to break or detach itself into individuals. Its tentacles might loop and cling to various protuberances, but its black bulk moved ever on.

I wandered through the maze of exhibits, stopping and listening where I would. The broad river of crowd divided to smaller eddies that swirled endlessly within and between the long rows of buildings and tents.

I passed glittering rows of farming machinery, red-painted, sturdy, clawed feet hooked into the ground. This bushy-bearded farmers tenderly fingered, and fought bitingly and ungrammatically with one another as to its merits.

A small tractor crawled upon its belly through the mud, and struggled and puffed its way over impossible obstacles. It was followed by a hysterical herd of small boys, who miraculously escaped destruction under its iron treads.

I crossed the square where the lean, cowed racing-horses were led patiently back and forth by the stable boys. Always the crowd was with me, beating its endless, monotonous forward path. I grew to hate it, longed to tear apart its slow viscosity, to sweep it away and clear the earth.

Inside the buildings I passed between endless counters piled high with pyramids of jelly, saw the broad smiles of the presiding housewives, smelt brown loaves of prize bread. Baskets of huge fruit were allotted place, red apples succulent and glowing, fuzzy peaches white and yellow. The presiding deity of the place—the veritable mother of all food—I found in the centre

of the shack. Her function was the creation of pie, and this of itself seemed to me sufficient. She was a large woman, red-faced, red-handed, and without a curve to her body. She was composed of but two straight lines, and between these lay her solid ample self. Her round fat arms were bare to the elbow and white with flour. On the table before her was an incalculable area of pie-crust, which she kneaded and powdered and cut with deft and stubby fingers. Behind her was a huge charcoal range upon which uncountable pies cooked, and around her were infinite battalions of pies, tremendous legions of pies, gigantic field-armies of pies. Exaggeration itself fell faint.

Before her, in the consummation of a newer miracle, fed the multitude. All men they were, and they ate steadily, unemotionally, as if they might eat eternally. They went from pie to pie to pie. They never ceased, even to wipe their lips. They never stopped to speak. They selected their next pie before they had eaten their last, and reached for it automatically. It was a spectacle so vast as to possess grandeur. Such a woman and such men might have created the world and devoured it in a day.

Around the eaters stood their wives—certainly none could have dared be sweethearts—gaping with that curious feminine lack of understanding—awed but unreasonable—at such prodigies of feeding.

I came next upon monster hogs, buried deep in the straw. Gruntingly they lifted their battleship bulks and waddled to the walls of the pen in response to the pointed sticks of small boys. The air was perme-

ated with animal odor, occasionally split by the fresh smell of cooking pastry and pungent aromatic spices.

With the Midway, sturdy respectability changed to blowsy, tarnished sin. Gaudy placards in primal colors bellied with the wind. All appeal was sensual, to grotesquerie or chance. From the tent of the "Circassian Syrian Dancing Girls" came the beat of a tom-tom, like that of a heavy pulse. Squarely in the passageway a three-shell merchant had placed his light table and was busily at work.

"Step up, ladies!" he called. "Step up, gents. Th' li'l pea against the world! Match it, an' y' win! You take a chance evry day. When yer born you take a chance, when you marry you take a chance, when you die you take an awful chance. Match me! Match me! Match me!"

His fingers moved like the dartings of a snake's tongue. The tiny pea appeared and disappeared.

"You lost! Poor girl. She lost her quarter. The Lord knows how she got it. Time tells an' you ain't old yet . . . !"

Beyond, outside a larger tent, sat a mountainous woman, a tiny fringed ballet skirt overhanging her mammoth legs. She was like some giant, jellied organism. To the crowd which gapingly surrounded her she addressed a continual tittering monologue.

"Step up here, baby. . . . Come up, lady! No, I ain't particular even if I am fat. . . . I don't care who looks at me. I'm a lady, I am. Hell, yes! See that man over there?" She swung a monster finger toward a barker. "He keeps me up here. . . . Sure,

he does! You jest let me down an' at him—I'll do him in—I can make twelve of him!"

Further on the crowd clustered thickly around a small tank, from the end of which rose a tall ladder topped by a tiny platform. So high was the ladder that it seemed to melt into a single line. As I watched, a young man climbed upon the edge of the tank. He grimaced and bowed to the crowd.

He stripped off a beflowered green bathrobe, disclosing a body as sleek as a wet seal's, and like a slender black monkey, climbed the ladder. Reaching the platform, he posed with outstretched arms. The crowd stiffly craned their necks.

At the side of the tank appeared another man with a flat, pock-marked face. There ensued an extraordinary dialogue.

"Leopold Benofoski!" shouted the man beside the tank to him in the air, "Is there any last word that you would like to leave your wife and family?"

"No," shouted the man upon the platform.

"Leopold Benofoski!" shouted the interlocutor. "Are you prepared to meet your fate?"

"Yes," said the young man.

"Then dive!" shouted the other, "—and God be with you!" He hid his face with a prodigious gesture of despair.

The young man drew back his arms until he was like a tightened bow. For a second he poised upon tensed legs, then, like a plummet, dropped from the edge of the platform. Incredibly, swiftly he flashed down. I caught the glint of his white legs as he hit the water, a

high splash, and he had drawn himself out of the other side. A grimace of shining teeth, and he was gone. The crowd, unmoved, went sluggishly on.

Slowly I worked myself through the area before the grand stand, where the crowd was thickest. There had been an accident upon the track: a young horse, "breaking" because of the hard path worn in the finely combed dirt between the turnstiles of the fence and grand stand, had reared and flung its fore legs into the air. A débâcle had followed as the animals close in the ruck had plunged into the leader. Three drivers had been thrown into a thresh of horses. Splintered sulkies and broken shafts lay in the débris, hazed by the cloud of dust. One horse, maddened with fear, had run squealing on, not to be stopped until it had completed the mile. One driver was badly injured.

This had had its effect upon the crowd. An uneasy ripple ran across the grand stand. There was a tinge of hysteria in the movement, a desire to clutch and shiver. As time passed the tension heightened. In the officials' stand I saw the small, staid figure of the judge, peering alertly at the frightened multitude. Then came a consultation of bent heads, and his hand swung up to the cord of the starting bell. The flat clang, for the bell was muffled, beat into the turbulence. A gradual quiet fell.

There followed the announcement of the curtailment of the programme to the immediate race of Richard Thomas Corkran.

I cut my way swiftly through the crowd, back to the

stables, for I desired to see the little horse leave the paddock.

I found him firmly braced up on stocky legs as they bound his anklets. His refulgent blanket drooped over his rotund torso, and from the striped folds emerged the long, grotesque neck and the absurd hobby horse head. As I approached he eyed me with droll appreciation, for I seemed always subtly to please him.

As the last anklet was buckled he shook himself. It was a methodical testing to see that he was entirely in place. Satisfied, he took a few short steps forward, carefully balancing his weight so that no muscle might be strained. At this juncture the white dog, apparently just released from captivity, bounced forward like a lively rubber ball. Fierce was his attack upon the nose of Richard Thomas Corkran. Devious were his advancings and retreatings. Quietly did the little horse receive this adulation. Again he shook himself.

Now was the spider-web tracery of harness put upon him, the silvered racing-bridle and the long thin bit. The blanket readjusted, the paddock-gate was opened, and with the small, white dog surging before him, his attendants following, he plodded toward the arena.

As he emerged into the crowd there beat upon him a roar of sound. Like a great wave it ran down the field and re-echoed back. It split into individual tendrils that were like pointed spears falling harmless from his small unmoved back. Through the path that opened out before him he slowly went, unnoticed and grave. He entered the weighing ring.

Courteously he stood as his blanket was removed, and he stood bared to the gaze of the three inspecting officials. Then the slender spider-wheeled sulky was pulled up and attached. Suddenly I saw his head lift: the contesting horse had entered the arena.

He was like a legged arrow, a magnificent, straight-lined dart. Thin to the point of emaciation, the bones of his body moved like supple reeds beneath a lustrous skin. Lightly muscled was he, tenuous skeins at his wrists and hocks. He looked as if he might drift before the wind.

He was very nervous. There was a continual thin white line across his nostrils as his high chest took air. A rippling shiver ran through him.

Richard Thomas Corkran was the first to leave the ring. Never had he taken his eyes from his opponent. His small, black muzzle remained fixed, imperturbable. Slowly he plodded out upon the track.

The flat sound of the bell, calling the race, drifted down from above my head. As I fought my way to the rail, the roar of the crowd rose to frenzy. The horses were going by the officials' stand to the starting post.

The challenger went first, his curved neck pulling against the bit, his gait a drifting, slithering stride. After him came Richard Thomas Corkran, a tiny, methodical figure. His head was down. I could see the sulky move gently forward under his easy step.

As they reached the post and turned the tumult died away to a clear and appalling silence. Glancing up the rail, I saw the heads of the crowd leaning forward in motionless expectation.

For an instant they hung unmoving at the post. Then the challenger seemed to lift himself in the air, his fore feet struck out in the beginning of his stride for Richard Thomas Corkran, without warning, had begun to *trot*.

They swept down toward the thin steel wire that overhung the track at the start. In breathless silence they passed, and I heard the shouted—"Go!"

Like a dream of immeasurable transiency, they vanished at the turn. I heard the staccato beat of hoofs as they went down the backstretch.

The crowd had turned. To the rail beside me leaped a man, balancing himself like a bird.

"He's ahead!" he shouted wildly. "He's ahead!—ahead!"

I swept him from the fence and climbed upon it myself. Above the bodies of the crowd at the far side of the track I saw two plunging heads. For a second only were they visible. Again they vanished.

They came down the stretch in silence, the spectators standing as though struck into stone. At the three-eighths post they seemed to be equal, but as they drew down the track I saw that the challenger led by a fraction of a foot. His flying hoofs seemed never to strike the ground. He was like some advancing shadow of incredible swiftness.

Richard Thomas Corkran raced with all that was in him. His small legs moved like pistons in perfected cadence.

As the challenger passed I could hear the talking of

the driver, low-pitched, tense, driving his horse to a frenzy of effort.

"Boy! Boy! Boy! Let him have it! Let him have it! Take it from him! I'm tellin' you. Go it! Go it! Go it!"

Richard Thomas Corkran's driver sat braced to his sulky, the reins loose upon the horse's back. I caught a glimpse of his grim, strained face above the dust of the advance.

Again there was the wild beating of hoofs up the back of the track.

"He's gotta do it now," shouted some one beside me. "He's gotta do it now. He can't lose! He can't lose!"

At the seven-eighths post the crowd thrust out its arms and began to implore. The waving arms leaped down with the striving horses. The challenger was ahead by yards. His red nostrils flared to the wind. Never had I seen such trotting!

He came under the wire in a great plunge, his driver madly whipping him. Richard Thomas Corkran was defeated!

For seconds the crowd hung mute, seemingly afraid to move or speak. Then from the edge of the grand stand came a single shout. It grew and ran around the field, swelling to an uninterrupted roar that seemed to split itself against the heavens—a tribute to the visitor, a greater tribute to the vanquished!

Richard Thomas Corkran plodded slowly around the track to the paddock gates. His head was down as before, and his rotund little body moved steadily onward. At the gates he halted and waited as the

winner was led through before him. Then he gravely followed and disappeared into the crowd.

He had met triumph with boredom; he met defeat, as a great gentleman should, with quiet courtesy and good humor. There was nothing of disdain or bitterness upon his small, black muzzle; Richard Thomas Corkran passed to the gods of horse as he had come, imperturbable, alert, sublimely sensible. But in his passing his tiny hoofs were shod with drama. Departing greatness may ask no more!

I saw him later in the paddock. His white, woolly dog was stilled; a negro rubber sobbed as he held a washing bucket. The little horse stood by himself, his feet as ever firm upon the ground, untouched, unmoved, and quietly resting. The thoughts that he possessed he kept, as always, to himself. I bowed my head and turned away.

COALY-BAY, THE OUTLAW HORSE

BY

ERNEST THOMPSON SETON

FOLLOWING the sensation it created when first published, in *Collier's Magazine*, "Coaly-bay" settled solidly into that type of public favor which makes for a classic. It is without doubt the most popular short-story about a horse in American literature. Nowhere, in all his many books, has Seton told a better tale.

COALY-BAY, THE OUTLAW HORSE¹

THE WILFUL BEAUTY

FIVE years ago in the Bitterroot mountains of Idaho there was a beautiful little foal. His coat was bright bay; his legs, mane, and tail were glossy black—coal black and bright bay—so they called him Coaly-bay.

“Coaly-bay” sounds like “Koli-bey,” which is an Arab title of nobility, and those who saw the handsome colt, and did not know how he came by the name, thought he must be of Arab blood. No doubt he was, in a faraway sense; just as all our best horses have Arab blood, and once in a while it seems to have come out strong and show in every part of the creature, in his frame, his power, and his wild, free, roving spirit.

Coaly-bay loved to race like the wind; he gloried in his speed, his tireless legs, and when careering with the herd of colts they met a fence or ditch, it was as natural to Coaly-bay to overleap it as it was for the others to sheer off.

So he grew up strong of limb, restless of spirit, and rebellious at any thought of restraint. Even the kindly curb of the hay-yard or the stable was unwelcome, and he soon showed that he would rather stand out all night in a driving storm than be locked in a comfortable stall where he had no vestige of the liberty he loved so well.

¹ From “Wild Animal Ways.” Copyright, 1916, by Ernest Thompson Seton. Published by Doubleday, Page & Company.

He became very clever at dodging the horse wrangler whose job it was to bring the horseherd to the corral. The very sight of that man set Coaly-bay agoing. He became what is known as a "Quit-the-bunch"—that is a horse of such independent mind that he will go his own way the moment he does not like the way of the herd.

So each month the colt became more set on living free, and more cunning in the means he took to win his way. Far down in his soul, too, there must have been a streak of cruelty, for he stuck at nothing and spared no one that seemed to stand between him and his one desire.

When he was three years of age, just in the perfection of his young strength and beauty, his real troubles began, for now his owner undertook to break him to ride. He was as tricky and vicious as he was handsome, and the first day's experience was a terrible battle between the horse-trainer and the beautiful colt.

But the man was skilful. He knew how to apply his power, and all the wild plunging, bucking, rearing, and rolling of the wild one had no desirable result. With all his strength the horse was hopelessly helpless in the hands of the skilful horseman, and Coaly-bay was so far mastered at length that a good rider could use him. But each time the saddle went on, he made a new fight. After a few months of this the colt seemed to realize that it was useless to resist, it simply won for him lashings, and spurrings, so he pretended to reform. For a week he was ridden each day and not once did he buck, but on the last day he came home lame.

His owner turned him out to pasture. Three days later he seemed all right; he was caught and saddled. He did not buck, but within five minutes he went lame as before. Again he was turned out to pasture, and after a week, saddled, only to go lame again.

His owner did not know what to think, whether the horse really had a lame leg or was only shamming, but he took the first chance to get rid of him, and though Coaly-bay was easily worth fifty dollars, he sold him for twenty-five. The new owner felt he had a bargain, but after being ridden half a mile Coaly-bay went lame. The rider got off to examine the foot, whereupon Coaly-bay broke away and galloped back to his old pasture. Here he was caught, and the new owner, being neither gentle nor sweet, applied spur without mercy, so that the next twenty miles was covered in less than two hours and no sign of lameness appeared.

Now they were at the ranch of this new owner. Coaly-bay was led from the door of the house to the pasture, limping all the way, and then turned out. He limped over to the other horses. On one side of the pasture was the garden of a neighbor. The man was very proud of his fine vegetables and had put a six-foot fence around the place. Yet the very night after Coaly-bay arrived, certain of the horses got into the garden somehow and did a great deal of damage. But they leaped out before daylight and no one saw them.

The gardener was furious, but the ranchman stoutly maintained that it must have been some other horses, since his were behind a six-foot fence.

Next night it happened again. The ranchman went out very early and saw all his horses in the pasture,

with Coaly-bay behind them. His lameness seemed worse now instead of better. In a few days, however, the horse was seen walking all right; so the ranchman's son caught him and tried to ride him. But this seemed too good a chance to lose; all his old wickedness returned to the horse; the boy was bucked off at once and hurt. The ranchman himself now leaped into the saddle; Coaly-bay bucked for ten minutes, but finding he could not throw the man, he tried to crush his leg against a post, but the rider guarded himself well. Coaly-bay reared and threw himself backward; the rider slipped off, the horse fell, jarring heavily, and before he could rise the man was in the saddle again. The horse now ran away, plunging and bucking; he stopped short, but the rider did not go over his head, so Coaly-bay turned, seized the man's foot in his teeth, and but for heavy blows on the nose would have torn him dreadfully. It was quite clear now that Coaly-bay was an "outlaw"—that is an incurably vicious horse.

The saddle was jerked off, and he was driven, limping, into the pasture.

The raids on the garden continued, and the two men began to quarrel over it. But to prove that his horses were not guilty the ranchman asked the gardener to sit up with him and watch. That night as the moon was brightly shining they saw, not all the horses, but Coaly-bay, walk straight up to the garden fence—no sign of a limp now—easily leap over it, and proceed to gobble the finest things he could find. After they had made sure of his identity, the men ran forward. Coaly-bay

cleared the fence like a deer, lightly raced over the pasture to mix with the herd, and when the men came near him he had—oh, such an awful limp.

"That settles it," said the rancher. "He's a fraud, but he's a beauty, and good stuff, too."

"Yes, but it settles who took my garden truck," said the other.

"Wall, I suppose so," was the answer; "but luk a here, neighbor, you ain't lost more'n ten dollars in truck. The horse is easily worth—a hundred. Give me twenty-five dollars, take the horse, an' call it square."

"Not much I will," said the gardener. "I'm out twenty-five dollars' worth of truck; the horse ain't worth a cent more. I take him and call it even."

And so the thing was settled. The ranchman said nothing about Coaly-bay being vicious as well as cunning, but the gardener found out, the very first time he tried to ride him, that the horse was as bad as he was beautiful.

Next day a sign appeared on the gardener's gate:

FOR SALE First-class horse, sound and gentle. \$10.00

THE BEAR BAIT

Now at this time a band of hunters came riding by. There were three mountaineers, two men from the city, and the writer of this story. The city men were go-

ing to hunt Bear. They had guns and everything needed for Bear-hunting, except bait. It is usual to buy some worthless horse or cow, drive it into the mountains where the Bears are, and kill it there. So seeing the sign up, the hunters called to the gardener: "Haven't you got a cheaper horse?"

The gardener replied: "Look at him there, ain't he a beauty? You won't find a cheaper horse if you travel a thousand miles."

"We are looking for an old Bear-bait, and five dollars is our limit," replied the hunter.

Horses were cheap and plentiful in that country; buyers were scarce. The gardener feared that Coaly-bay would escape. "Wall, if that's the best you can do, he's yourn."

The hunter handed him five dollars, then said:

"Now, stranger, bargain's settled. Will you tell me why you sell this fine horse for five dollars?"

"Mighty simple. He can't be rode. He's dead lame when he's going your way and sound as a dollar going his own; no fence in the country can hold him; he's a dangerous outlaw. He's wickedder nor old Nick."

"Well, he's an almighty handsome Bear-bait," and the hunters rode on.

Coaly-bay was driven with the packhorses, and limped dreadfully on the trail. Once or twice he tried to go back, but he was easily turned by the men behind him. His limp grew worse, and toward night it was painful to see him.

The leading guide remarked: "That there limp ain't no fake. He's got some deep-seated trouble."

Day after day the hunters rode farther into the mountains; driving the horses along and hobbling them at night. Coaly-bay went with the rest, limping along, tossing his head and his long splendid mane at every step. One of the hunters tried to ride him and nearly lost his life, for the horse seemed possessed of a demon as soon as the man was on his back.

The road grew harder as it rose. A very bad bog had to be crossed one day. Several horses were mired in it, and as the men rushed to the rescue, Coaly-bay saw his chance of escape. He wheeled in a moment and turned himself from a limping, low-headed, sorry, bad-eyed creature into a high-spirited horse. Head and tail aloft now, shaking their black streamers in the wind, he gave a joyous neigh, and, without a trace of lameness, dashed for his home one hundred miles away, threading each narrow trail with perfect certainty, though he had seen them but once before, and in a few minutes he had steamed away from their sight.

The men were furious, but one of them, saying not a word, leaped on his horse—to do what? Follow that free ranging racer? Sheer folly. Oh, no!—he knew a better plan. He knew the country. Two miles around by the trail, half a mile by the rough cut-off that he took, was Panther Gap. The runaway must pass through that, and Coaly-bay raced down the trail to find the guide below awaiting him. Tossing his head with anger, he wheeled on up the trail again,

and within a few yards recovered his monotonous limp and his evil expression. He was driven into camp, and there he vented his rage by kicking in the ribs of a harmless little packhorse.

HIS DESTINED END

This was bear country, and the hunters resolved to end his dangerous pranks and make him useful for once. They dared not catch him, it was not really safe to go near him, but two of the guides drove him to a distant glade where bears abounded. A thrill of pity came over me as I saw that beautiful untamable creature going away with his imitation limp.

"Ain't you coming along?" called the guide.

"No, I don't want to see him die," was the answer. Then as the tossing head was disappearing I called: "Say, fellows, I wish you would bring me back that mane and tail when you come back!"

Fifteen minutes later a distant rifle crack was heard, and in my mind's eye I saw that proud head and those superb limbs, robbed of their sustaining indomitable spirit, falling flat and limp—to suffer the unsightly end of fleshly things. Poor Coaly-bay; he would not bear the yoke. Rebellious to the end, he had fought against the fate of all his kind. It seemed to me the spirit of an Eagle or a Wolf it was that dwelt behind those full bright eyes—that ordered all his wayward life.

I tried to put the tragic finish out of mind, and had not long to battle with the thought; not even one short hour, for the men came back.

Down the long trail to the west they had driven him; there was no chance for him to turn aside. He must go on, and the men behind felt safe in that.

Farther away from his old home on the Bitterroot River he had gone each time he journeyed. And now he had passed the high divide and was keeping the narrow trail that leads to the valley of Bears and on to Salmon River, and still away to the open wild Columbian Plains, limping sady as though he knew. His glossy hide flashed back the golden sunlight, still richer than it fell, and the men behind followed like hangmen in the death train of a nobleman condemned—down the narrow trail till it opened into a little beaver meadow, with rank rich grass, a lovely mountain stream and winding Bear paths up and down the waterside.

"Guess this'll do," said the older man. "Well, here goes for a sure death or a clean miss," said the other confidently, and, waiting till the limper was out in the middle of the meadow, he gave a short, sharp whistle. Instantly Coaly-bay was alert. He swung and faced his tormentors, his noble head erect, his nostrils flaring; a picture of horse beauty—yes, of horse perfection.

The rifle was levelled, the very brain its mark, just on the cross line of the eyes and ears, that meant sure—sudden, painless death.

The rifle cracked. The great horse wheeled and dashed away. It was sudden death or miss—and the marksman *missed*.

Away went the wild horse at his famous best, not

for his eastern home, but down the unknown western trail, away and away; the pine woods hid him from view, and left behind was the rifleman vainly trying to force the empty cartridge from his gun.

Down that trail with an inborn certainty he went, and on through the pines, then leaped a great bog, and splashed an hour later through the limpid Clearwater and on, responsive to some unknown guide that subtly called him from the farther west. And so he went till the dwindling pines gave place to scrubby cedars and these in turn were mixed with sage, and onward still, till the faraway flat plains of Salmon River were about him, and ever on, tireless as it seemed, he went, and crossed the canyon of the mighty Snake, and up again to the high wild plains where the wire fence still is not, and on, beyond the Buffalo Hump, till moving specks on the far horizon caught his eager eyes, and coming on and near, they moved and rushed aside to wheel and face about. He lifted up his voice and called to them, the long shrill neigh of his kindred when they bugled to each other on the far Chaldean plain; and back their answer came. This way and that they wheeled and sped and caracoled, and Coaly-bay drew nearer, called and gave the countersigns his kindred know, till this they were assured—he was their kind, he was of the wild free blood that man had never tamed. And when night came down on the purpling plain his place was in the herd as one who after many a long hard journey in the dark had found his home.

There you may see him yet, for still his strength endures, and his beauty is not less. The riders tell

me they have seen him many times by Cedra. He is swift and strong among the swift ones, but it is that flowing mane and tail that mark him chiefly from afar.

There on the wild free plains of sage he lives: the stormwind smites his glossy coat at night and the winter snows are driven hard on him at times; the Wolves are there to harry all the weak ones of the herd, and in the spring the mighty Grizzly, too, may come to claim his toll. There are no luscious pastures made by man, no grain foods; nothing but the wild hard hay, the wind and the open plains, but here at last he found the thing he craved—the one worth all the rest. Long may he roam—this is my wish, and this—that I may see him once again in all the glory of his speed with his black mane on the wind, the spur-galls gone from his flanks, and in his eye the blazing light that grew in his far-off forebears' eyes as they spurned Arabian plains to leave behind the racing wild beast and the fleet gazelle—yes, too, the driving sand-storm that overwhelmed the rest, but strove in vain on the dusty wake of the Desert's highest born.

HIGHBOY RINGS DOWN THE
CURTAIN

BY

GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN

A FINE dignity distinguishes the work of George Agnew Chamberlain. Diplomat, hunter, special correspondent, traveler, he observes from the vantage point of an unusually rich background, and writes—particularly of his own country and its people—with rare sincerity and understanding.

HIGHBOY RINGS DOWN THE CURTAIN ¹

HELEN OF TROY, out of Suydam Queen, was a high-stepping mare, one of the best tandem leaders that ever sidled out for a turn, and she was killed by an overdose of the joy of life. Bimbo, the stable trainer, was to blame; but only in part. Going back to the true source of cause and effect, it was her genial owner, familiarly known as Kindly Crewe, who was at fault, because he had been away for three weeks and because the last thing he had said to Bimbo was "Keep your hands off Helen; I like her full of oats."

She had grown so full of oats in that short space of time that in trying to race them out of her system in the Lower Paddock she took a header over the fence, breaking one slim ankle and her neck. It was small comfort to say that no horse had ever before done such a fool thing, and that if the mare had so little sense as to try to stop a twenty-mile pace in three yards rather than jump a four-barred barrier, she deserves her fate. No; there was no comfort whatever in putting the blame on Helen of Troy, darling of the stable and of her master's heart.

On the day that Kindly was to return Bimbo took a twenty-four-hour leave by assault. He told Mrs. Crewe that he would rather spend the rest of his life mucking out the stalls of the Grady Short Haul Truck-

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ing Corporation than be on the place when the master came back; and, as to performing the feat of actually breaking the news to him, why, he'd rather run at the fence the way Helen did and break his own bally neck.

Staring at Bimbo's corpulent figure, Mrs. Crewe did not smile; she trembled. She wished she, too, could run away, and then thought for one cowardly moment of sending a telegram which would catch Kindly as he came through town. Promptly she put the impulse behind her and fell back on love to help her through the ordeal with such effect that Crewe was to remember the soft, firm feel of her straining arms for the rest of his days with a sort of adoring wonder. It was not Mrs. Crewe but Kindly himself who spoke first after the blow of the news was struck, and then only to comfort:

"Buck up, Nelly girl. Don't take it so much to heart, my dear."

That was all he ever said in regard to the death of Helen of Troy. He braced his shoulders and went calmly about his business, but not his pleasure. In person, he was one of those young-old men whose spines have been ramrod trained in the saddle and on the box seat, and who paint their cheeks with the brush of the keen morning breezes of autumn. Florid, you might have called him; tousled of hair, shot with gray, bulky, but with the kindliness which had nicknamed him radiating from his eyes and face in a benign and perpetual glow.

He and Nelly had no living children. He loved Nelly—and horses; she loved him.

Horses had been his sole pleasure, but with the tragic death of his adored mare the love of a lifetime seemed to shrivel within him, and let no man wonder. For a blue-ribbon tandem leader is a rare thing. Leaders can and have been made; but such are mediocre. Your true leader—a rhythm of lovely flesh, slender bone and taut nerves, that beats the signal of the slip of the rein and the caress of the tossed lash at a turn with an instinct sympathy which makes horse and master one heart, one pulse and one understanding love—is never made, but born.

Such had been Helen of Troy. Watch Kindly Crewe bringing his team along at a spanking trot, shoulders squared, arms out, whip at the salute and Helen in the lead. See the ripple and the spring of her glossy body, the red glow of her wide nostrils, the forward prick of her nervous ears and the wise flashing of her noble eyes.

“B-r-r-u! Ho, my pretty! Up with your knees! Swing wide! Swing wide! See the people stare! Out you go for the turn, girlie! Cluck! Cluck!”

Was that the song that was ringing in Kindly’s ears, making him deaf to all other calls? No harsh word escaped him, and he uttered no breath of reproach against Fate or Bimbo, and least of all against Helen of Troy. He was still the kindest of men, but it was cruel to see the way he turned his back on the paddocks and the stables and crueler still to watch the withering

of his youth. Golf! Bridge! How pitifully ineffectual were his mind and hands, so adept at a grander game!

And that was not the worst of it. His cheeks grew pouchy, his shoulders drooped and his big chest looked as if it were beginning to cave in. He would start to go somewhere and then stop, as though, after all, it were not worth while. Even in town, in the executive offices of F. S. & K. D. Crewe, his eyes would suddenly quit work, but stay wide open, so that they gave his secretary the creeps.

Mrs. Crewe was at her wits' ends to know what to do, for a mood is not like a single moment of sorrow. It is continuous, intangible, something that cannot be surrounded by two arms.

Bimbo had run away, leaving to her the whole burden of breaking the terrible news, and she had handled the crisis magnificently. Now he felt that it was his turn. He knew horses and he knew his master. He knew just what was the matter with Kindly and he knew the only cure. A man's love for a woman is one thing—an individual loyalty; his love for horses is quite another. Your true horseman may have a great affection for a special pet, but what he loves and reveres from deep down in his being is not a horse but horseflesh—horseflesh as a temple of noble qualities, of endearing foibles, of an astonishing capacity for understanding and coöperation, and alas, for going to the bad. Horses have all the great traits of man and a few of the mean ones; courage, strength, loyalty, fortitude, and a kick below the belt for an enemy. They

are more knowable and scarcely less lovable than women. Comfort does not depend in any one of them, but in all. These things Bimbo knew thoroughly, however far short he might have fallen of expressing them in words.

He mooned about the stables, sat on the top rails of the Upper and Lower Paddocks and stood for hours watching the Crewe string put through their paces at the end of a longe or hitched to the drag or a sulky. If there was an answer to Kindly's trouble, and his own, it was nuzzling its oats, rollicking on the fallow turf or trotting up and down before his eyes, if only he had the shrewdness to see it. He did not deceive himself for a moment with the thought that he might go outside for something to take the place of Helen of Troy. He knew instinctively that though Kindly's cure lay in a horse, it would be hopeless to attempt to force his purse in order to salve his heart. Spontaneity, surprise, joy in possession of an undreamed treasure—all these must Bimbo wrest from the gods that his intuition might come to full fruition.

And here was horseflesh in plenty. He began at the bottom. The two colts and the filly came in for first consideration, but they were too young; they represented altogether too long a wait. He discarded them with a sigh, but finally. There was quite a class of two-year-olds. These he mulled over in his mind during long wakeful hours and then watched for as many more as they were paraded before him in every type of harness from the dishabille of a hackamore to silver tabs and patent-leather blinkers. But never once did

his own hands itch to grasp the reins with adept touch and send a message quivering down the oldest telegraph line known to man. Then came the hacks, and last of all the coach horses.

Crewe's four-in-hand of dappled grays was famous on two sides of the Western ocean. They had carried off more blues than any one combination of horses is entitled to, if the indoor sport of showing teams in harness is to endure. They formed a close corporation which was next door to a monopoly, and would have been cordially hated had they been the property of any man less beloved than Kindly. It was with this renowned team that he was scheduled to lead the coach parade through Central Park in a last effort to bring back the days when a coach and four had the right of way in the public's heart no less than on the road.

Bimbo watched them swinging by, hitched to the drag ballasted with every stable hand that could climb aboard. He knew these horses so well—every ripple and swell of their muscles; every shade of their color, in and out of sweat; every dapple, every hair! He knew their moods and their power, their infinitesimal failings and their transcendent perfections; he knew them as a mother knows her own young. Alas, he knew them so well that, though his eyes dimmed with pride at the staccato thunder of their passing, he did not ask himself even subconsciously if there was another such as Helen of Troy among them. They were not individuals; they were a team and gloried in the fact. Hence their extraordinary collection of decorations.

There remained only the waste—the outcasts of the

stable, few in number, each marked by some bar sinister of ineradicable fault either in disposition or physical ensemble. These could not even be sold as from the Crewe string. They were doomed to be shipped away via the back door as soon as a nondescript auction offered the chance of an ignominious and unostentatious exit. Besides the Upper and Lower Paddocks, there was another inclosure, also a paddock, but never spoken of as such. It was called the pasture in a tone that made one think of cows. Here were penned the outcasts—the pariahs of the equine House of Crewe.

Bimbo climbed down from the perch from which he had been sampling the top of the cream in horse-flesh and walked with dragging feet and lowered head toward the pasture. He walked as one without hope, but dogged in duty. Long since, he had abandoned all thought of casually picking out a winner by the exercise of sheer perspicacity and had fallen back by an unperceived transition to the ancient formula of deduction through elimination. He would not thus have named the process going on in his mind as he scuffed heavily along on his way to look over the despicable remnants of a great stable; he would have called it simply, passing up no bets.

He reached the gate to the pasture, folded his arms on its top bar, settled his chin on them and stared with lackluster gaze at the small bunch of blemished horses which was gathered in a hollow some distance away. At that range the most expert buyer would have been at a loss to pick and choose among them, but Bimbo needed to go no nearer. The mere sight of pastern,

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gaskin or hock, withers or buttock, was enough for him to reconstruct an entire tragedy. It was as he had foreseen. No glimmer of hope came to light his eyes which were rapidly turning glassy with despair. As he was turning from the gate, however, a form silhouetted against the evening sky on a near-by knoll, drew his attention only to throw him into a rage.

The object of his wrath was a magnificent gelding, steel-gray in color and gloriously dappled with shadowy spots as big as the palm of Bimbo's hamlike hand. To visiting horsemen he was a thing of indescribable beauty until they heard his name, and then he turned ugly by association before their eyes. He was a rebel of the first water and of uncertain age, but surely no chicken. His splendid teeth, too freely shown, marked him as over four and under seven. His name was Highboy, and Bimbo hated him with a whole-hearted hatred.

Now, a word as to Highboy and how he had come unheralded and unpedigreed to the Crewe stables. The explanation lay in his color, dappled-gray, and in the fact that Kindly's scouts had orders to buy in every horse of that particular shade that came into the market, the only other qualifications being as to size and soundness of limb. It was specifically stipulated that temper was no bar; and, as it happens, Bimbo himself had been the joyful discoverer of Highboy at a sinister sale where no questions were asked or answered and prices were correspondingly low.

Kindly's theory was excellently conceived. His dapple-gray coaching team was the pride of his heart, and being subject to the ills of accident and age was

constantly backed by a string of under-studies. He was not particular as to the temper of these supers, because, up to the advent of Highboy, he had been confident that he could handle all the spirits one skin could hold when bottled at the near wheel of a heavy coach and surrounded on two other dimensions by well-trained old-stagers.

But Highboy had kicked the stuffings out of this theory in five crowded minutes, and incidentally eaten a hole in the neck of his side partner before the excited grooms, swallowing their terror at the voice of command, were able to cast him free of harness and bit.

Since that day the rebellious gelding had lived a life of ease, all the more maddening to the conquered because his stable manners were perfect. He was easy to handle, loved to be manicured, curried and brushed, and would eat apples gently off the palm of a child's hand. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, no one had mentioned harness to him again. There seemed to be a general and tacit acceptance that Highboy's expression on that subject had been peculiarly final. Life, human and otherwise, also equipment, were too valuable in Kindly's estimation to be cast beneath the active feet of an equine cyclone that had cost only three hundred dollars in cash to the highest bidder.

Bimbo had been so elated at the moment of purchase, had brought the horse home in such a transport of pride and had so bragged of the price at which his astuteness had secured the prize of a season, that that miserable three hundred dollars immediately became a festering thorn in the flesh. The old trainer

would gladly have wiped out the sting of defeat with three thousand of his hard-earned dollars had there been any particular method of so doing. But the iron of the situation went still deeper. Three lots of remnants had gone to the obscure auction block since Highboy's advent, yet he remained in slothful possession of bed and board.

"No, Bimbo," Kindly had said on the three occasions, "I can't do it, questions or no questions. It's on account of his gentle ways, you see. It might turn out that he would win some woman's heart and then break her neck. We'll just have to keep him, and at least he's easy to look at."

Easy to look at! As if that made things any better! Now, in the moment of his deepest despair of finding a cure for his sorely wounded master, Bimbo stared at the beauty of Highboy, at his perked ears, broad forehead, fearless eye, arched neck; at the glorious dapples that came and went under the flick of the sunlight; at the splendid bush of his sweeping tail and at the five straight lines of a perfect horse—four cannons and a level back. God help him, what a waste! Bimbo's eyes grew bloodshot with rage; his lips parted, he swore and from swearing sank to vituperation.

"Gelding! Bah! Lounge lizard! Mantel ornament! Father unknown; likewise mother! Good to look at as naked sin and rotten from the ground up! Parasite and blatherskite! Eunuch!"

Highboy pitched on his forefeet, flaunted his tail, threw up his widespread heels, insulted Bimbo, and then tore off to the farther side of the pasture, where he

began to trot up and down, neck arched, nose in, ears pointing forward, hoofs spurning the sod and plume streaming on the wind. The old trainer's face turned purple with a fresh access of rage; he spat violently on the ground and turned his back on the grand-stand performance. That night, his bulky frame feeling unusually exhausted, he retired early, but not to sleep. The vision of Highboy persecuted him. How could anything so lovely be intrinsically so mean? Quite suddenly he came to a tremendous resolve. He would hitch Highboy to two tons of drag, with a board fence between him and the heaviest, staidest off-wheeler in the stable, and either break him or kill him or be killed. His own life had so lost its savor that he risked only the small end of nothing. Who would choose to live on with his mouth full of ashes when he might go down gloriously in combat with a mortal enemy?

The more he thought of the scheme the better it looked. Elimination of every other possibility had led him finally to Highboy. Anything which would change suddenly the status of the rebel must surely appeal to Kindly's dormant affection for horseflesh in the essence. Here would be spontaneity, surprise and joy in possession of an undreamed treasure, all rolled into one! What if he, Bimbo, should fail and die in the attempt? Well, there were times when a lot can be said for death as a boon. What if he should kill Highboy? He produced a grin in the dark which was a cross between a sardonic grimace and a gleam of pure glee. His sane judgment told him that Kindly would consider the event an economic relief. He could hardly wait for

the morning, and thus thinking he slept and slept soundly.

Now, many a man has gone to bed with a problem and awakened to find its answer staring him in the face. Thus with Bimbo. He thought he had hit on a daring attempt at solution of his trouble on the night before, but when he awoke an idea stood waiting for him which for sheer boldness made his previous scheme seem faint-hearted cowardice.

It was as though the apparition of Highboy had been in reality an important message, an attempt at long-distance horse telegraphy, a hunch in the making, which had knocked and knocked in vain on the barred door of Bimbo's waking intelligence and then given up the struggle only to creep into the warm emptiness of his sleeping brain and fill the vacant apartment chockablock with its presence.

He did not stop to reason. He clambered out of bed and into his clothes by six of the clock, Eastern standard time. By seven Highboy was in his stall; by 7:30 he had munched two quarts of oats and by eight he was reveling beneath such a combing and rubbing down as had not been his portion in many weeks. By 8:30 he was in harness and by 8:35 Bimbo was beating it for the manor house as fast as his stumpy legs and stumpy breath would permit him to travel. He actually had the pleasurable illusion that he was flying. He burst into the morning room where Kindly, alone, was dejectedly eating a leisurely breakfast preparatory to catching the 9:05 for town.

The facial contortions induced by the emotions of

disaster or great joy are astoundingly similar; consequently, and since Bimbo remained for a moment speechless by force of circumstances and the weight of his paunch, it was natural that Kindly should have picked the wrong answer to his trainer's inarticulate commotion and spoken as follows:

"If anything has happened to one of the horses, Bimbo, just shoot him and put him out of his misery. If it's anything else, use your own judgment. Whatever it is, don't bother me."

"I won't bother you, Mr. Crewe," said Bimbo, recovering his breath, "further than to request you to walk as far as the Upper Paddock."

Ordinarily the trainer addressed his employer as Kindly, except when before strangers or in the show ring, and the extremely formal opening of the interview should have warned Crewe that something unusual was afoot, something so formidable that it could not be carelessly brushed aside. His eyes assumed the vacant stare that on several recent occasions had proved so disconcerting to his secretary. With a shrug of his shoulders which looked more like a shrinking quiver, he turned on Bimbo.

"Get this straight," he said; "I'm not going near the paddocks, and, what's more, I'm not going to drive in the coach parade."

"Not—going—to—drive — in — the — coach — parade!" whispered Bimbo with a pause between each word, his eyes slowly bulging from his head.

"That's what I said," confirmed Kindly. His eyes grew vacant again. "I'm still trying to decide," he

continued presently, "whether I'll show this year at all."

"Trying—trying to decide whether you'll show!" gulped Bimbo, amazement in his florid face and tears in his voice. Then suddenly he awoke from the trance into which his master's terrible words had plunged him. His bulldog chin shot out and his head up. "Listen to me!" he roared. "I've spoken to you as trainer to his boss and you wouldn't hear. Now it's Bimbo to Kindly and man to man. Listen to me! You're going to the Upper Paddock if I have to call the hands and carry you there. You're going now! Do you get that?"

"I heard you," said Kindly quietly. "You're fired, of course, Bimbo. I'm sorry."

"Fired!" snorted Bimbo. "Well, I don't care a damn if I am. Who minds being fired for five minutes? Will you come or do you still want to make it a ride?"

Kindly's eyes grew hard for the first time in the twelve happy years of almost brotherly companionship with his trainer. They became two points of steel which drilled Bimbo through and through. It was a look which in any other moment would have struck terror to his lion heart, but in this instance he took it so calmly that a shadow of doubt swept across Kindly's troubled face. But only for an instant. He drew out his watch.

"I'll come," he said shortly, "just for the five minutes it will take me to put Charlie in charge."

Side by side, and in silence, the two estranged friends, comrades in many a shared victory, left the house and walked briskly toward the stables; but with

a difference. Kindly carried his head low, while Bimbo seemed to be striving to stretch his short neck to the heavens. His eyes protruded like the orbs of a crab as they strained forward for a first sight of the distant paddock, and were filled with a reaching anxiety which changed suddenly to complacent joy. His heart began to pound with something more than the labor of mere physical exertion.

"Hold it, boy!" he murmured inaudibly in exalted supplication. "Hold it, my beauty!"

The path to the stables led the two men close to the great Upper Paddock, which embraced the four-furlong practice track. As they approached the fence, Bimbo, in spite of himself, slanted stealthy eyes at Kindly; and Kindly, knowing that he was watched, kept his gaze stubbornly on the ground. The consequence was that Kindly saw where he was going and Bimbo did not; Kindly stepped over a hose, while Bimbo tripped on it and all but came a purler. As he rushed headlong to catch up with his balance Kindly shot one glance across the fence and forthwith came violently to a stop.

The sight which met his eyes was the eighth, ninth and tenth wonder of the world. On the fresh green turf, well away from the track, stood the high English dogcart, two idle grooms and two horses, hitched tandem. The wheeler, a splendid bay, tried and true, was a bit restive from the chest up, tossing his head impatiently; but the leader, steel gray and darkly dappled, seemed posed in weathered Pentelic marble. From the straight-hanging plume of his tail, along the sheer line

of his level back, over the curve of his arched neck and up to and including his erect ears, he was as fixed as a painting—only he lived. Waves of electric life throbbed from his still body to beat against Kindly's bursting temples.

"What horse is that?" he asked sharply.

"Highboy, sir," replied Bimbo promptly, without pausing to wonder at the question.

"How long has he stood like that?" continued Kindly, laying trembling hands on the top rail of the fence to steady himself.

"Since I told him to hold it while I fetched you," answered Bimbo out of the fullness of his faith. He sidled up to Kindly and suddenly all his pent emotions came burbling out in a volley of chatter: "Great balls of sweat, Kindly, don't you tumble? Don't you know he knows you're looking at him? Pride, by God! He's in the lead, ain't he? He's out and free; he's alone, not one of a level bunch. He's It, and he knows it just like you and me when we're on the box with the horn tallyhoing to make the people stare."

"You're right, Bimbo," gulped Kindly.

He was still in a daze; he was choking; he was at the very bottom of a translucent sea and he would drown if he didn't get to the top in a hurry. Up he came, and up. His shoulders began to straighten and his chest to bulge. All the blood in his veins started a race from his heels to his head. It was like the sap of springtime, hurrying back with youth to a stricken world. It lifted him, bore him swiftly upward until

he shot out of the deep waters into the freedom of a new air.

"You're right," he breathed exultantly, staring hungrily at Highboy.

As though he had called, the sometime rebel turned his head with a slow, majestic movement and looked his owner square in the eyes. Instantly Kindly's body became vibrant. He slipped over the fence as smoothly as a snake over a stone wall, approached the horse quietly, and reaching out a steady hand began to caress him. Lowering his nose, Highboy promptly butted him in the chest and struck the sod a single sharp blow with his right fore hoof.

"I get you!" cried Kindly with boyish jubilation as he recoiled from the dignified and firm rebuff. "You mean 'Let's go!'"

He started toward the cart wheel, his arms extended and his fingers working as though they were in rehearsal for a half-forgotten play. The grooms moved forward, stood at attention and laid strong hands on the reins close to the bits. The horses quivered and pawed; bent their heads and cast them up again, almost lifting the grooms from their feet. Kindly sprang smoothly to the driver's box with a catlike alacrity astonishing in one of his generous build and recent age. He picked up the rug, wrapped it around his thighs in knowing manner, sank back on the high pad, leaned forward, gathered the lines and lifted the whip from the socket.

"Cast loose, boys," he said quietly, "and stand free."

The grooms complied and leaped aside; the horses

shot forward on a bee line across the sward, moving in a swift but nervous, jerky trot. For a moment they pulled hard, tightening the wires, listening, ears back, for a message, and presently it came to them. It told of gentle, knowing hands giving them their will for a moment—velvet in the mouth for a moment—and then whispering steadily of the strength of steel. For that they had waited—the touch and call of the master. They heard and answered, eased their weight from the bits, pricked their ears forward and steadied down, freeing themselves from domination by obedience to the law. They became a glorious rhythm, a harmony, smooth to the eye, melodious to the ear.

They were making at right angles for the track and the fence, but Kindly had no intention of risking an expert turn. He bore down gently on the left reins as if he were guiding a commonplace bobsled. Gradually he brought the team around in a wide sweep to the track; and then, bit by bit, moment by moment, gave them their heads until they were racing along at a thunderous trot. Around they went and around once more. He eased them, let them go, eased them again, talking soft words to Highboy, getting acquainted, telling him confidential things in a low tone which suggested further intimacies and perhaps love in the near future.

As they passed for the second time the gaping stable crowd which had gathered around Bimbo, Kindly called out in a clear voice, "Open the gate!"

"No, Kindly," protested Bimbo. "Not to-day!"

His shout floated down the wind, weakening into a

wail as he saw his master swing from the track to the turf and, with slip of rein and touch of lash, boldly venture on a broad figure eight. At the first turn Highboy seemed to check and waver, but in reality his lithe body was merely squirming to get a message and get it quickly—and it came.

“B-r-r-r-u!” Kindly caught up a six-inch loop over the middle knuckle of his driving hand. “Cluck! Cluck!” He let the loop go and at the same instant cast the whip’s lash gently to Highboy’s off shoulder. Into his full stride swung the gelding, leaning for the left swerve. Swiftly they made the small circle. “B-r-r-r-u!” again, slip of rein, lash to the other shoulder, “Cluck! Cluck!” and an all but perfect turn to the right. They came out of the figure eight and straightened. Bimbo forced back the gate with his own hands to give them the joy of the open road and the freedom of the wide world.

An hour later Kindly, perched on a stool, and Bimbo on a feed box, were assisting at Highboy’s toilet after exercise. No words can describe the affection and admiration, amounting almost to awe, with which they regarded him. Kindly was still bubbling over with the feats of intelligence and intuition which the horse had performed during the morning’s work-out and related them *seriatim* and over and over to his avid audience of one. But these wonders of technic faded into nothingness beneath the shadow of the great miracle of Highboy himself—Highboy as the triumphant vindication of horseflesh as an essence, one and indivisible.

“You may be thinking, Bimbo,” said Kindly,

"that he's been a leader before, away back somewhere in his stormy past; but I tell you he hasn't. I know it! I don't mean to say he jackknifed on me. No; nothing so crude as that; but he asked questions all the time!"

"Did he now?" exclaimed Bimbo, even while he nodded his head up and down to indicate that he could quite understand the marvel. Half an hour later Kindly was still talking.

"I ask you, Bimbo," he was saying portentously, "what's behind all this business of coach and four, high cart, sulky or any bit of clean-stepping prettiness between the shafts? Why do we do it? Horse and man, why do we love it? I'll tell you. Just two things—exhilaration and admiration. Take one away and the other is spoiled. And don't forget the horses are in on both. You bet they are! They drain the joy from action and the nectar from the public eye. Look at Highboy here! Golly! See the coxcomb turn his head! What happened to him this morning? No; I don't want you to talk. I'll tell you. The same thing as has put many a pretty woman over the hurdles. Boredom and vanity in conjunction with the psychological moment."

"Sure-lee!" interjected Bimbo, spitting at a grain of oats and hitting it. "That's what he fell for!"

"Don't think I'm not giving you credit, Bimbo," resumed Kindly hurriedly. "I am, and your pay's raised 10 per cent from this day. Now, here's what I was saying, only clearer: The horse is the thing, of course; but what makes him show is the public eye, just the

same as you and me when we're on the box with four reins in one hand and the whip at the salute. Do you get me, Bimbo? What I mean is, when there's no one left to cry 'Oh, look! Look!' as we come bowling along, and all we hear is 'Gee! See what's got away from Buffalo Bill!' why, coaching will be finished, metaled roads or no metaled roads."

Bimbo shook his head affirmatively.

"When you or me is on the box of a sharpish morning, Kindly, we be just kids—and the horses too."

"That's it," confirmed Kindly, rising from the stool to flex his muscles.

He opened and bent his arms with a snap; his eyes sparkled and his face radiated such joy that it seemed to illumine the stable with a golden light. He threw back his head and drew a long breath. Ye gods, what smells! Pungent oats and hay. Warm odors, more vulgar. The acrid smell of sweat and the sweet breath of horses. Leather—leather, bright and new; leather, worn and dry; leather, polished to the flower of old oak! Then his eyes fell upon Highboy and promptly filled with the illuminating moisture which is the visual distillation of happiness. He went to the horse, cast his right arm over his withers, pressed against him, caressed him. This time he was not repulsed. Highboy spoke to him with a whimpering whinny, curved his neck sharply and rubbed with his nose first Kindly's empty pocket and then his dangling and equally empty left hand.

"Heigh! Some one fetch me an apple, and fetch it quick!" called Kindly as his fingers crept along the

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bulging muscle beneath the mane and sought the two hollows behind the pointed ears. "What a hide, Bimbo! Baby's skin, here behind the ears of him. Not a blemish anywhere. All dappled silk, from eyes to buttocks. What a glory of a horse to be reborn, all in a morning, from a bit of understanding flattery!"

When Kindly finally wandered back to the house along toward one o'clock, still smiling from the depths of a happy daze, his wife greeted him with the following words:

"Why, Kindly Crewe! Did you miss your train? What on earth are you doing here? You know I never eat anything myself for lunch." And then as she really looked at him, "Oh, my dear, what has happened? Whatever it is I am glad!"

At the end of a week the office, which had been worrying itself sick over his sad and too continual presence, began to howl over his absence, as is the way of offices, and to predict dire results if he did not come to town by the first train or a flying machine. It pointed out that his many previous absences had been premeditated and consequently predigested by the monster organization, but this was different. There were deals to be closed; checks to be signed; papers, documents, that awaited his decision.

In the meantime—see Kindly and his tandem team seeking out the widest of the clay roads in the oak-and-pine belt. The oaks have turned; their leaves are red as pigeon's blood against the dark and juicy green of the everlasting pines. The air tingles and tinkles with the first pricklings of the frost. Look at Kindly, the

youth of him! Shoulders squared, arms out, whip at the salute and Highboy in the lead. Up—up into the collar for the open stretch. Oh, the beauty of his action, the pride of his head, the joy and the spring and the drive of his stride! “I’m Highboy! Highboy! King of the road for a day!” and then—

“B-r-r-r-u Ho, my beauty! Up with your knees! Swing wide! Swing wide! Pipe the guy that’s standing there to watch you take the turn! Cluck! Cluck!”

No slip of rein, no expert tossing of the guiding lash, for Highboy knows it all and more. Out he sidles, leans for the turn and flashes into line again, trotting free and wide, crash for crash with the hoof beats of the bay between the shafts. On they go, sailing along on whirling pin wheels of brilliant red, tempted to nick the outer edge of the foolish town—tempted and yielding. Not into the thick of the traffic. Oh, no! Just into the park and out again, to see the people stare!

Before Bimbo could scratch his ear, so to speak, show week was upon them and the Crewe string entered for a try at every class. Kindly drove, Bimbo drove, and Charlie, the head groom, nervously took his turn. They showed everything that wears leather for pleasure and in due course worked down to “Hackneys: tandem.” Long had been the debate waged between Kindly and Bimbo and back again as to just what Highboy would do in the ring and whether they should show him at all, always to come up against the blank wall of the question, “What if the judges call for a canter?”

Now a word as to cantering tandem, trickiest of all

equine maneuvers, barring the *haute école*. The driver takes his team on the trot, straight at a solid barrier. At the very moment of the right-angled swerve the horses must change lead and break into a canter; but that is not all. Just one thing more: Leader and wheeler must start in step, hoof for hoof and stride for stride. The real question—the silent question behind all the spoken ones asked by Kindly of Bimbo and by Bimbo of Kindly was, “Can living man throw Highboy into a canter and bring him out again short of the Canadian border?”

“Well,” concluded Kindly, “perhaps the judges won’t call for it. They don’t have to, and they haven’t for three seasons on end. And what if they do? Perhaps Highboy will go through it once, just to show off. Anyway, I’m not going to try him out—not once; not even here in the paddock. If he killed himself or me before I trot him up and down under the noses of the boys who thought they had a laugh on you, Bimbo, why, I’d never forgive myself—never!”

The great day and the fateful hour came. There were five tandem teams and Kindly drove fourth. If the quantity and quality of the rattle of applause which followed the evolutions of the pedigreed bay and the brilliant dappled gray of unknown lineage meant anything to the judges, it surely meant another blue ribbon to the Crewe stables. Highly pleased with the world in general, himself and Highboy in particular, Kindly stepped briskly from the ring, looked at his watch and saw he must hurry to dress in time for dinner.

Friends stopped him right and left, some for a hasty

word and some for the outline of the horse in history. They knew it was not in him to be brusque, and, one and all, they never missed a chance to take a leisurely warm bath in his smile whenever opportunity offered. Consequently, by the time he reached the outer lobby the best part of half an hour had passed, and as he stood there for one last handshake there came rolling out to him an uproar shot through with jabs of lightning in the shape of shouts of "Kindly! Kindly!"

Opening a way for himself with a plowing shoulder, he rushed back to the ring and for a single second stood transfixed. In the center of the tanbark was his best English dogcart with Bimbo on the driver's seat. In front of Bimbo was the wheeler, quivering but steady, and in front of the wheeler stood Highboy, erect on his hind legs and looking as high as the Woolworth Building as he thrashed around with his fore feet and madly tried to throw bit and bridle from his tossing head.

"So," raced the thought through Kindly's brain, "the judges called them back for a canter, after all, and Bimbo couldn't find me!"

He tore off hat and coat as he leaped into the ring, and in a moment was slipping up over one wheel of the cart as Bimbo, trembling and purple with rage, surrendered the reins and descended via the other.

"B-r-r-r-u! You dappled devil!" shouted Kindly.

Down came Highboy to all fours, deliberately turned his head all the way round and looked at his friend and master as one who would say, "So you're back where you belong, are you?"

Under cover of the ecstatic roar from the crowd,

Kindly leaned over and spoke to the spluttering Bimbo:

"Oh, never mind that! I know what happened. They've called for a canter. Tell me quick, has he seen any of the other teams do it?"

"Three," answered Bimbo—"all rotten."

The bugle sounded. Kindly telegraphed a message along the tautened lines. The team sprang forward in unison and he began to talk aloud.

"Up with your knees, boys! Into your collar! Snap into it! Show them—show them how! Now! Hoop-la, Highboy! You've got it! Hold it! Hold it! Steady boy! Whoa!"

The grooms sprang to the horses' heads. As he helped his master down, Bimbo chortled in a raucous voice, all malice forgotten, "What a canter, eh, Mr. Crewe? Oh, you Highboy!"

"The top of the cream, Bimbo!" answered Kindly, blinking the tears from his shining eyes. "Smooth as music and moonlight. I didn't do anything. Really, I didn't. He did it all himself. He isn't a horse at all. He's something God thought of just once."

"Well," murmured Bimbo reflectively, "I wouldn't lay quite the whole of it on God. If you'd heard some of the things I called him while he stood on his hind legs for five solid minutes, trying to paw holes in the roof, perhaps you'd get my meaning."

"Why, that's the very thing I was thinking of!" laughed Kindly with upthrown head. "He was made just for himself and me."

Two weeks later Kindly and his blue-ribbon team were back on the soft roads of the open country. The

parchment leaves of the oaks were hanging on through the grim, cold winds of winter and the pines loomed big and dark above the bare, brown soil. But life ran with a surging note, high and full, through the veins of horse and man. They were coming in from a ten-mile tearing drive, and as of old the lure of town and people was strong upon them. Just a nick into the town, dash across the Boulevard, into the park and out again! This was the song of hoof and heart: "Rat-tat, tat-tat! Here we come! Look! Look! Aren't we lovely? Aren't we strong? And young, young, young!"

As they swept up to a crossing at a spanking trot, Kindly saw grouped on the left curb a shrimp of a man pushing a loaded baby carriage, and behind him his wife and two children of walking size. On the right was a narrow walk and the pronged iron fence of a great estate. To Kindly and the rushing horses it mattered not that the family group was greasy to look at and bundled in garments that poisoned the winter air. They were people—people with eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to leap in admiration.

Suddenly an icy chill shot through Kindly's extended arms. The man saw them, and yet he had started to cross with the woman and children strung out behind him! What on earth were they thinking? Didn't they know? Gangway! Gangway! Did they take a tandem in flying-wedge formation for a motor-car with horn, emergency brake and clapperty chains that could stop in its own length? In the terror of that instant Kindly grew hard, and rage seized him as he yelled at the top of his voice, "Heigh! You! Look out!"

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He saw the man's face turn and leer at him with sneering lip as he kept on straight into the path of the flying team. Kindly's hands ate up the reins for a short hold. He knew he could lift Highboy, but never the wheeler. A baby, God help him! He could almost have killed the man with joy; but a baby! He had the lines at last, wrapped to his elbows. He braced his feet, bent his back forward to the coming strain, but never needed to pull. Highboy waited for no order; he shot straight into the air, leaped high, twisted violently to the side and fell, impaled to the heart on the sharp prongs of the iron fence. Wheeler and cart wrenched around to follow and crashed against his hanging buttocks, already quivering in the death throes. Kindly was hurled over and through the wreckage to find himself standing on numbed feet directly above the baby carriage and the rat-faced little man.

"Are you crazy?" he choked.

"You crazy," replied the stranger with alien accent, and walked on, uncurious, his family trailing stolidly behind him.

Late that night, when Bimbo came to the manor house to report that all that could be done in the way of cleaning up the pitiful mess had been accomplished, he found word that Kindly wished to see him in person, and followed the maid to the library with quaking heart. He expected to find his master an utterly broken man, but apparently Kindly had more than recovered from the actual shock of the disaster. Instead of breaking, it seemed rather to have added something to him. He was reading a book as Bimbo entered, and

the eyes he raised from its pages were calm and warmly affectionate.

"Sit down, Bimbo," he said. "This isn't a business interview, though I may tell you of some radical changes in the classes of horses we are to breed from now on. What I want to do to-night is to talk about Highboy. I want to fix him for all time in my mind just as he was—the oneness and the pride of him—and I'll tell you why. He taught me something. That isn't it, either. He gave me something—something besides his life, I mean."

Bimbo nodded his bullet head solemnly and started to speak, but Kindly stopped him with a raised hand and continued: "You know, they say the heart can't remember for long the features of a face. Try to think of some one you've loved who is gone, and what do you remember? Some favorite photograph of that face and perhaps where it was taken. But Highboy didn't have features; he had points. A warm eye on a broad forehead. Let's remember that. Winged nostrils and a chest like an apron of silk. Clean forelegs that he could use like a boxer. Dapples! What dapples, Bimbo; big as your hand, each with the luster of a black pearl behind a silvery veil! A strong hide and in it himself, courage and rebellion, docility and rage, an unconquerable spirit—undying flame!"

Bimbo's eyes became suffused.

"Let up on that, Kindly," he said gruffly and in haste. "I just been burying of him."

"So you have," said Kindly, untroubled but with understanding. "Well, old friend, this is what I

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wanted to tell you: The ratty little man with the baby carriage was right. If only you could have seen his face when he said 'You crazy!' I am crazy; that is, I was crazy this morning. Don't eight million hooters blare the swan song I wouldn't hear? Haven't the metaled roads been tolling the death knell on us for a dozen years? And this is what Highboy did for me, Bimbo. He took the sting out of it. What a message! What a clarion call! What a sunset to our day of glory! God help us, Bimbo, what a curtain!"

THE END





